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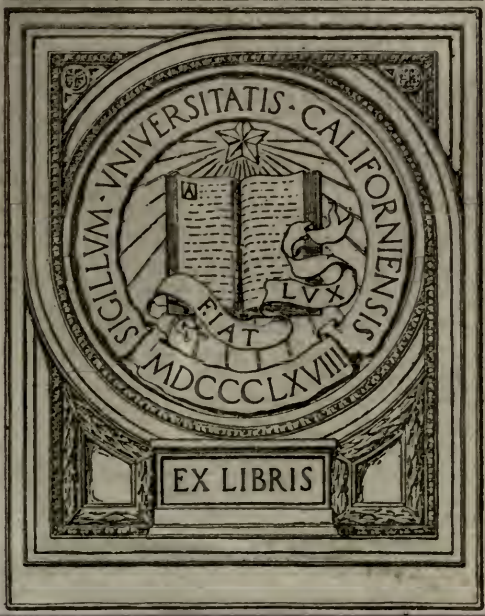

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Honoré de Balzac

Honoré de Balzac

PRIVATE LIFE

VOLUME II

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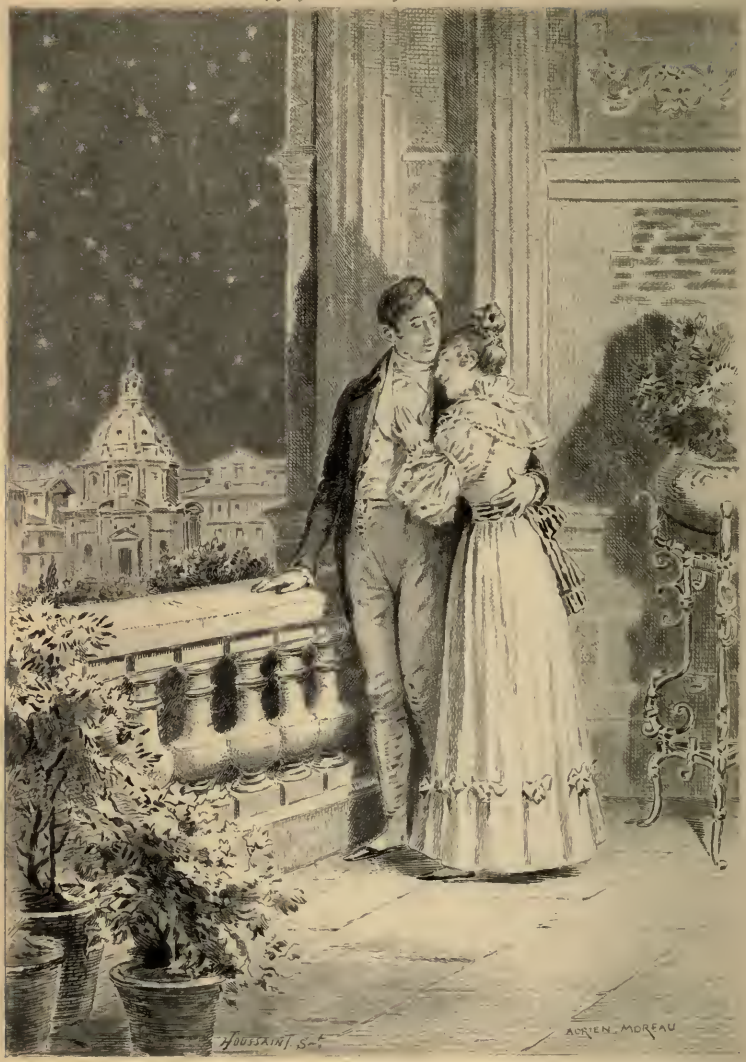

LOUISE AND FELIPE

He led me out on the balcony of the palace where we are and from which we can see a part of Rome,—there his language was worthy of the scene which offered itself to our eyes; for there was a superb moonlight. As we already speak Italian, his love, expressed in this language so soft and so suitable for passion, appeared to me sublime. He said to me that, * * *

THE NOVELS

OF

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME
COMPLETELY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

MEMOIRS OF TWO YOUNG WIVES

BY WILLIAM WALTON

WITH FIVE ETCHINGS BY ADRIEN NARGEOT AND
CHARLES-HENRI TOUSSAINT, AFTER DRAW-
INGS BY ADRIEN MOREAU

IN ONE VOLUME

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BROWSING ROOM

MEMOIRS OF TWO YOUNG WIVES

189937

This, dear George, will add nothing to the splendor of your name, which on the contrary will throw its magic reflection over this book; but there is in this, on my part, neither calculation nor modesty. I wish thus to bear witness to the true friendship which has continued between us during our travels and our separations, notwithstanding all our occupations and the wickedness of the world. This sentiment will doubtless never change. The company of friendly names which will accompany my compositions serves to mingle a pleasure with the pains which their number causes me, for they are not produced without trouble, to speak only of the reproaches drawn upon me by my menacing fecundity, as if the world which presented itself before me were not still more fecund. Will it not be fine, George, if some day the antiquary of perished literatures should find in this company only great names, noble hearts, saintly and pure friendships, and the glories of this century? Can I not show myself more proud of this certain happiness than of an always doubtful success? For him whom you know well, is it not a happiness to be able to call himself, as I do here,

Your friend

DE BALZAC.

Paris, June, 1840.

MEMOIRS OF TWO YOUNG WIVES

I

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO RENÉE DE MAUCOMBE

Paris, September.

My dear lamb, I am abroad also, I am! And, if you have not written to me at Blois, I am also the first at our pretty rendezvous of correspondence. Do not let your fine black eyes rest too long on my first phrase, and keep your exclamations for the letter in which I confide to you my first love. One is always hearing of the first love; there is then a second? "Silence!" you will say to me; "tell me rather," you will ask me, "how you came out of the convent in which you were to take your vows?" My dear, whatever may happen to the Carmelites, the miracle of my deliverance is the most natural thing. The cries of a terrified conscience ended by overcoming the orders of an inflexible policy, that was all. My aunt, who did not wish to see me die of consumption, vanquished my mother, who constantly prescribed the novitiate as the sole remedy for my illness. The black melancholy into which I fell after your departure hastened this happy

dénouement. And I am in Paris, my angel, and I thus owe to you the happiness of being there. My Renée, if you could have seen me, the day on which I found myself without you, you would have been proud of having inspired such deep feeling in so young a heart. We had dreamed so much together, unfolded our wings so many times and lived so much in common, that I thought our souls were soldered together, one to the other, like those two Hungarian girls whose death was related to us by Monsieur Beauvisage, who certainly was not the man of his name: never was the physician of a convent better chosen. Were you not ill at the same time as your darling? In the dull depression in which I was, I could only recognize one by one the bonds which unite us; I believed them broken by separation, I was filled with disgust for existence like a turtle-dove who has lost its mate, I found it pleasant to die, and I was dying quite pleasantly. To be alone in the Carmelites, at Blois, in the fear of taking my vows without the preface of Mademoiselle de la Vallière and without my Renée! why, it was an illness, a mortal illness! This monotonous life in which each hour brings a duty, a prayer, a task so exactly like all the others that in any locality one can always tell what a Carmelite is doing at such or such an hour of the day or the night; this horrible existence, in which it is entirely immaterial whether the things which surround us are or are not, had become for us the most varied,—the flight of our spirit knew no bounds, fancy had given to us

the key of her kingdom, we were alternately one for the other a charming hippogriff, the most alert awakened the sleepiest, and our souls wantoned at will in taking possession of that world which was forbidden us. There was nothing even to the "Lives of the Saints" which did not aid us in comprehending the most hidden things! The day in which thy sweet company was taken away from me, I became that which a Carmelite is in our eyes, a modern Danaïde who, instead of endeavoring to fill a bottomless cask, draws every day, from I know not what well, an empty vessel, hoping to bring it up full. My aunt was ignorant of our inward life. She did not understand my aversion to existence, she who has made for herself a celestial world in the two acres of her convent. To embrace the religious life at our ages, an excessive simplicity is required, which we have not, my sweet one, or else that ardor of devotion which renders my aunt a sublime creature. My aunt sacrificed herself to an adored brother; but who can sacrifice one's self to unknown persons or to ideas?

It is now nearly two weeks that I have had so many wild words smothered within me, so many meditations buried in my heart, so many observations to communicate and recitals to make which could only be made to you, that without the alternative of written confidences substituted for our dear conversations, I should have suffocated. How necessary to us is the life of the heart! I commence my diary this morning imagining that yours is

begun, that in a few days I shall be living in the depths of your beautiful valley of Gémenos, of which I know only that which you have told me, as you are going to live in Paris, of which you know only what we have dreamed about it.

Well then, my dear child, on the morning which will remain marked with a red seal in the book of my life, there arrived from Paris a young woman companion and Philippe, my grandmother's last valet de chambre, sent to take me away. When, after having had me brought into her chamber, my aunt communicated this news to me, joy tied my tongue, I looked at her with a stupid air.

"My child," she said to me in her guttural voice, "you leave me without regret, I see it; but this adieu is not the last, we shall see each other again: God has marked you on the forehead with the sign of the elect, you have that pride which leads equally to heaven as to hell, but you have too much nobility to descend! I know you better than you know yourself: passion will not be with you what it is in ordinary women."

She drew me gently toward her and kissed me on the forehead, communicating to me that fire which devours her, which has clouded the azure of her eyes, softened her eyelids, wrinkled her golden temples and yellowed her fine countenance. She gave me a sensation of goose flesh. Before replying, I kissed her hands.

"Dear aunt," I said to her, "if your adorable bounties have not enabled me to find your Paraclete

healthy to the body and sweet to the heart, I should weep as many tears to return to it as you could know how to desire my return. I would wish to return here only if betrayed by my Louis XIV., and if I should capture one, it would be only death that would wrest him from me! I should not fear the Montespans."

"Go, foolish girl," said she smiling, "do not leave those vain ideas here, take them away with you; and know that you are more Montespan than La Vallière."

I embraced her. The poor woman could not refrain from conducting me to the carriage, where her eyes were alternately fixed upon the paternal arms and upon me.

Night surprised me at Beaugency, plunged in a moral torpor produced by this singular adieu. What was I then going to find in this world so much desired? In the first place, I did not find anyone to receive me, all the preparations of my heart went for naught,—my mother was at the Bois de Boulogne, my father was at the Council; my brother, the Duc de Rhétoré, never returned, I was told, but to dress himself before dinner. Mademoiselle Griffiths—she has *griffes*, claws—and Philippe conducted me to my apartment.

This apartment is that of that grandmother so much beloved, the Princesse de Vaurémont from whom I derived something of a fortune, of which no one has ever spoken to me. In this, you will partake of the sadness which seized me on entering this

spot consecrated by my memories. The apartment was as she had left it! I was to sleep in the bed in which she had died. Seated on the edge of her sofa, I wept without seeing that I was not alone, I thought how I had often placed myself at her knees in order better to hear her. There, I had seen her countenance framed in its yellow laces and emaciated by age as well as by the sorrows of grief. This chamber seemed to me still warm with the heat which she had maintained there. How was it that Mademoiselle Armande-Louise-Marie de Chaulieu was obliged, like a peasant woman, to sleep in her mother's bed, almost on the day of her death? for it seemed to me that the princess, dead in 1817, had expired the night before. This chamber offered to my view articles which should not have been there, and which proved to what an extent those occupied with the affairs of the kingdom are careless of their own, and how little, when she was dead, this noble woman had been borne in mind, she who will be one of the grand feminine figures of the eighteenth century. Philippe as good as understood the source of my tears. He said to me that in her will the princess had bequeathed me her furniture. My father, moreover, permitted the grand apartments to remain in the state in which they had been left by the Revolution. I rose, Philippe opened for me the door of the little salon which communicated with the reception apartment, and I found it in the disordered state which I knew,—the panels over the doors which had contained valuable

paintings present their empty frames, the marbles are broken, the mirrors have been carried away. Formerly I was afraid to mount the grand staircase and to traverse the vast solitude of these lofty apartments, I reached that of the princess by a little stairway which descends under the arch of the great one and which leads to the private door of her dressing-room.

The apartment, composed of a salon, of a bedchamber and of this pretty cabinet in vermilion and gold of which I have spoken to you, occupies the pavilion on the side of the Invalides. The hotel is only separated from the boulevard by a wall covered with climbing plants and by a magnificent alley of trees which mingle their summits with those of the young elms of the side alley of the boulevard. Were it not for the blue and golden dome, for the gray masses of the Invalides, you would think yourself in a forest. The style of these three rooms and their situation proclaims them the ancient state apartment of the Duchesses de Chaulieu, those of the dukes are in the opposite pavilion; these two are decently separated by the two detached parts of the building and by the pavilion of the façade, in which are those grand salles, murky and echoing, which Philippe showed to me still stripped of their splendor, and just as I had seen them in my childhood. Philippe assumed a confidential air on seeing the astonishment depicted on my countenance. My dear, in this diplomatic mansion, all the people are discreet and mysterious.

He told me then that everyone was waiting for a law by which the value of their property was to be restored to the *émigrés*. My father postponed the restoration of his hotel until the day of this restitution. The architect of the king had estimated the expense at 300,000 francs. This confidence had the effect of causing me to drop on the sofa of my salon. And, instead of taking this money for my marriage, why had my father left me to die in the convent? This was the reflection which came to me on the threshold of this door. Ah, Renée, how I would have nestled my head on your shoulder, and how I would have gone back to the days when my grandmother loved these two chambers! She who only exists in my heart, you who are at Maucombe, at two hundred leagues from me, these are the only two beings who love me and who have loved me. This dear old woman whose looks were so young would have wished to revive at my voice. How we would have understood one another! Memory has changed all at once the disposition in which I dwelt at first. I have found I know not what of saintly in that which appeared to me a profanation. It seemed to me pleasant to breathe the vague odor of powder *à la Maréchale* which lingered there, pleasant to sleep under the protection of these curtains in yellow damask with white figures in which her looks and her breath should have left something of her soul. I directed Philippe to restore these same objects to their original state, to give to my apartment the aspect and the life suitable to a

living-room. I have myself indicated how I desire to have it arranged, assigning to each piece of furniture its proper place. I have passed them all in review in taking possession of everything, in directing how these antiquities which I love may be renewed. The chamber is in white, somewhat tarnished by time, as also the gold of the whimsical arabesques shows in some places reddish tints; but these effects are in harmony with the faded colors of the carpet of the Savonnerie which was given by Louis XV. to my grandmother, as well as his portrait. The clock was a present from the Maréchal de Saxe. The porcelains of the chimney-piece came from the Maréchal de Richelieu. The portrait of my grandmother, taken at the age of twenty-five, is in an oval frame, opposite to that of the king. The prince does not appear at all. I love this frank omission, without hypocrisy, which depicts with one stroke this delicious character. In a serious illness which befell my aunt, her confessor insisted that the prince, who was waiting in the salon, should enter.

"With the doctor and his prescriptions," she said.

The bed has a canopy, with stuffed hangings; the curtains are gathered back in handsome and ample folds; the furniture is in gilded wood, covered with that yellow damask with white flowers with which the windows are also draped, and which is lined with a stuff of white silk which resembles moire. The panels over the doors, painted by an unknown artist, represent a rising sun and a moonlight. The chimney-piece is arranged very curiously. It can

readily be seen that in the last century much of the time was passed at the corner of the fire. It was there that the great events occurred,—the hearth of gilded copper is a marvel of sculpture, the casing is of a precious finish, the shovel and the tongs are delightful pieces of workmanship, the bellows is a jewel. The tapestry of the screen is Gobelin, and its mounting is exquisite; the fantastic figures which traverse it, on the feet, on the supporting bar, on the wings, are ravishing; everything in it is finished like a fan. Who had given to her this beautiful piece of furniture which she held in great affection? I should like to know. How many times have I seen her, her foot on the rest, buried in her luxurious seat, her dress partially brought up on her knee by her attitude, taking, putting back and taking again her snuff-box from the little table between her box of pastilles and her silk mittens! Was she coquettish? Up to the day of her death, she took care of herself as if she were only on the morrow of that beautiful portrait, as if she were waiting for the flower of the Court to come thronging around her. This seat recalls to me the inimitable movement which she gave to her petticoats in settling herself in it. These women of a past era have carried away with them certain secrets which depict their epoch. The princess had certain movements of the head, a certain manner of distributing her words and her looks, a particular language which I do not find in my mother,—there were to be found in her a delicacy of wit and good

nature, of resolution without preparation; her conversation was at once prolix and laconic, she related well and depicted in three words. She had above all that excessive freedom of judgment which certainly has influenced the working of my mind. From seven to ten years of age I lived in her pockets; she was as fond of drawing me to her as I was of going. This preference was the cause of more than one quarrel between her and my mother. Now, nothing stirs up a sentiment so much as the icy wind of persecution. With what grace would she say to me: "Ah, there you are, little witch!" when the serpent of curiosity had lent me its movements enabling me to slip through the doors to her. She felt herself loved, she loved my ingenuous love which brought a ray of sunshine into her winter. I do not know what passed in her apartments in the evenings, but she received a great many people; when I entered in the morning, on tiptoe, to see if she had yet arisen, I saw the furniture of her salon disarranged, the tables for play set out, plenty of snuff spilled in places. This salon is in the same style as the chamber, the furniture is singularly formed, the wood has fluted mouldings, and terminates in deer's feet. Garlands of flowers richly sculptured and beautiful in character wind across the mirrors and descend in long festoons. On the consoles are beautiful Chinese vases in the shape of cornucopias. The ground of the furniture is deep scarlet and white. My grandmother was a proud and piquant brunette, her complexion might be

divined from her choice of color. I have found again in this salon a writing-table the figures of which had much occupied my eyes formerly; it is encrusted in chased silver; it was given to her by a Lomellini of Genoa. Each side of this table represents the operations of the various seasons; the figures are in relief, there are hundreds of them in each scene. I have remained for two hours quite alone, resuming my souvenirs one by one, in the sanctuary in which expired one of the women of the Court of Louis XV. the most celebrated by her wit and by her beauty. You know how I was brusquely separated from her without warning, in 1816.

"Go and say good-bye to your grandmother," my mother said to me.

I found the princess, not surprised at my departure, but apparently unaffected by it. She received me as usual.

"You are going to the convent, my jewel," she said to me; "you will there see your aunt, an excellent woman. I will take care that you are not sacrificed, you will be independent, and even enough so to marry whom you wish."

She died six months later; she had placed her will in the hands of the most assiduous of her old friends, the Prince de Talleyrand, who, in visiting Mademoiselle Chargebœuf, found means to inform me through her that my grandmother forbade me to take the vows. I strongly hope that, sooner or later, I shall meet the prince; and, without doubt he will tell me more. Thus, my dear lamb, if I

have not found anyone to receive me, I have consoled myself with the shade of the dear princess, and I put myself in the condition to fulfill one of our agreements, which is, do you remember, to initiate each other into the smallest details of our situation and of our life. It is so sweet to know how and where lives the being that is dear to us! Describe to me carefully the least of the things which surround you, everything in short, even to the effects of the setting sun among the big trees.

October 10.

I had arrived at three o'clock in the afternoon. About half-past five, Rose came to tell me that my mother had come in, and I descended to pay my respects to her. My mother occupies on the ground floor an apartment arranged like mine, in the same pavilion. I am above her, and we have the same private stairway. My father is in the opposite pavilion; but, as on the side of the court he has in addition the space which is taken in ours by the grand stairway, his apartment is much larger than ours. Notwithstanding the duties of the position which the return of the Bourbons has imposed upon them, my father and my mother continue to inhabit the ground floor and can there hold their receptions, so vast are the mansions of our ancestors. I found my mother in her salon, in which nothing had been changed. She was dressed. From step to step as I descended, I asked myself how she would be to me, this woman, who has been so little a mother

that I have only received from her in eight years the two letters which you know. Thinking that it would be unworthy of me to display an impossible tenderness, I composed myself in the rôle of a religious idiot, and I entered sufficiently embarrassed inwardly. This embarrassment was soon dissipated. My mother displayed perfect grace; she did not display toward me any false tenderness, she was not cold, she did not treat me as a stranger, she did not take me to her bosom as a beloved daughter; she received me as if she had seen me the night before, she was the most gentle, the most sincere friend; she spoke to me as if I were a grown woman, and began by kissing me on the forehead.

"My dear little one, if you are going to die at the convent," she said to me, "it is better to live with us. You thwart your father's designs and mine, but we are no longer in the times in which parents were blindly obeyed. The intention of Monsieur de Chaulieu, which is in accord with mine, is to neglect nothing which may render life agreeable to you and to permit you to see the world. At your age, I would have thought as you do; thus I will not quarrel with you,—you cannot comprehend that which we ask of you. You will not find in me a ridiculous severity. If you have doubted my affection, you will soon recognize that you have deceived yourself. Although I wish to leave you perfectly free, I think that at first you will do wisely to listen to the advice of a mother who will be to you as a sister."

The duchess spoke with a gentle voice, and adjusted my schoolgirl's mantle. She charmed me. At thirty-eight, she is as beautiful as an angel; her eyes are of a blue-blackness with lashes like silk, her forehead without wrinkles, her skin white and pink as though she painted, her shoulders and her bust surprising, her figure rounded and slender like yours, her hand of a rare beauty, it is of the whiteness of milk; nails on which the light lingers, they are so polished; the little fingers slightly separated from the others, the thumb of an ivory finish; finally, she has the foot in keeping with her hand, the Spanish foot of Mademoiselle de Vandenesse. If she is thus at forty, she will be beautiful still at sixty. I replied, my lamb, as a submissive daughter. I was to her that which she was to me, I was even better,—her beauty vanquished me, I forgave her her abandonment, I comprehended that a woman such as she would have been carried away by her rôle of queen. I said it to her as naïvely as if I were talking with you. Perhaps she did not expect to find a language of love in the mouth of her daughter. The sincere homage of my admiration touched her greatly,—her manners changed, became still more gracious; she abandoned the *you*.

"Thou art a good daughter, and I hope that we shall remain friends."

This phrase appeared to me of an adorable ingenuousness. I did not wish to let her see how I took it, for I understood soon enough that I should permit her to believe that she is much more fine and more

spirituelle than her daughter. I accordingly played the silly, she was enchanted with me. I kissed her hand repeatedly, saying to her that I was very happy that she treated me thus,—that I felt myself happy and content, and I even confided to her my terror. She smiled, took me by the neck to draw me toward her and kissed me on the forehead with a gesture full of tenderness.

"Dear child," she said, "we have a number of people to dinner to-night; you will think perhaps, with me, that it will be better to wait till the dressmaker has furnished you before making your entry into the world; therefore, after having seen your father and your brother, you will go up again to your own apartment."

In which I acquiesced with all my heart. The ravishing toilet of my mother was the first revelation of that world of which we had caught glimpses in our dreams; but I did not experience the slightest emotion of jealousy. My father entered.

"Monsieur, here is your daughter," said the duchess to him.

My father suddenly assumed for me the most tender manners; he so perfectly played his rôle of father that I believed he had his heart in it.

"Here you are then, rebellious daughter!" he said to me, taking my two hands in his and kissing me with more of gallantry than of paternity.

And he drew me toward him, took me around the waist, clasped me to embrace me on the cheeks and on the forehead.

"You will make up for the vexation which your change of vocation causes us by the pleasures which your success in the world will give us.—Do you know, Madame, that she will be very pretty and that you can some day be proud of her?—Here is your brother, Rhétoré.—Alphonse," said he, to a handsome young man who entered, "here is your sister, the nun, who has renounced her veil."

My brother came up without hurrying himself, took my hand and clasped it.

"Kiss her," said the duke to him.

And he kissed me on each cheek.

"I am delighted to see you, sister," he said to me, "and I am on your side against my father."

I thanked him; but it seems to me that he could very well have come to Blois, when he went to Orléans to see our brother, the marquis, in garrison there. I withdrew, fearing that some strangers might arrive. I have made some arrangements in my apartment, I have put on the scarlet velvet of the handsome table everything necessary for writing to you while reflecting on my new position.

Here you have, my beautiful white lamb, neither more nor less, just what has taken place on the return of a young girl of eighteen, after an absence of nine years, in one of the most illustrious families of the kingdom. The journey had fatigued me and also the emotions of this return to the bosom of a family: I accordingly retired as at the convent, at eight o'clock, after having supped. They have preserved

even a little service in Saxony porcelain which this dear princess kept for her own use when alone and when the fancy seized her.

II

THE SAME TO THE SAME

November 25.

The next morning, I found my apartment put in order and arranged by the old Philippe, who had put flowers in the Chinese vases. Finally I was installed. Only, no one had thought that a boarding-school girl of the Carmelites was hungry early in the morning, and Rose had a thousand troubles to get me a breakfast.

"Mademoiselle went to bed at the hour when dinner was served and rose just as monseigneur was retiring," she said to me.

I sat down to write. About one o'clock my father knocked at the door of my little salon and asked me if I could receive him: I opened the door to him, he entered and found me writing to you.

"My dear, you have to dress yourself, to accommodate yourself here; you will find twelve thousand francs in this purse. It is a year's revenue which I grant to you for your living expenses. You will arrange with your mother to take a governess who will be agreeable to you, if Miss Griffith does not please you; for Madame de Chaulieu will

not have the time to accompany you in the morning. You will have a carriage at your order and a domestic."

"Let me keep Philippe," I said to him.

"So be it," he replied. "But do not have any care,—your fortune is sufficiently considerable to prevent your being any charge either to your mother or to me."

"Would I be indiscreet in asking you what is my fortune?"

"Not in the least, my child; your grandmother left to you five hundred thousand francs which were her savings, for she did not wish to deprive her family of a single piece of land. This sum has been placed in the Funds. The accumulation of interest has produced to-day about forty thousand francs of income. I wished to employ this sum to constitute the fortune of your second brother,—thus you derange very seriously my projects; but in a little while perhaps you will concur in them,—I shall expect everything of you yourself. You seem to me more reasonable than I had hoped. It is not necessary for me to say to you how a Demoiselle de Chaulieu conducts herself; the pride depicted in your features is my safe guarantee. In our household, the precautions which smaller people take for their daughters are harmful. An injurious speech concerning you might cost the life of him who permitted himself to utter it, or of one of your brothers, if Heaven should be unjust. I will not say more to you on this subject. Adieu, dear little one."

He kissed me on the forehead and went away. After persevering in it for nine years, I cannot explain to myself the abandonment of this plan. My father had expressed himself with a clearness which I liked. There is not in his speech the slightest ambiguity. My fortune should go to his son the marquis. Who then has had bowels of compassion? is it my mother, is it my father, should it be my brother?

I remained seated on my grandmother's sofa, my eyes on the purse which my father had left on the chimney-piece, at once satisfied and discontented with this attention which kept my thoughts on the money. It is true that I no longer have to think of it: my doubts are all cleared up, and there is something worthy in sparing me all wounded pride on this subject. Philippe had run about all the morning among all the different merchants and tradespeople who were to be charged with bringing about my metamorphosis. A celebrated dressmaker, a certain Victorine, came, as well as a maker of *lingerie* and a shoemaker. I was impatient, like a child, to know how I should be when I had quitted the sack in which the conventual costume envelops us; but all these work-people want a great deal of time,—the corset-maker asks a week if I do not wish to spoil my figure. This is becoming serious, I have then a figure? Janssen, the shoemaker of the Opéra, has positively assured me that I have my mother's foot. I have passed all the morning in these serious occupations. There has even come a

glove-maker who has taken the measure of my hand. The maker of lingerie has had my orders. At the hour of my dinner, which is that of the déjeuner, my mother said to me that we would go together to the modiste for hats, in order to form my tastes and enable me to order my own. I am bewildered at this commencement of independence, like a blind man who should recover his sight. I can judge of what a Carmelite is to a young lady of the world,—the difference is so great that we should never have been able to conceive it. During this déjeuner my father was thoughtful, and we left him to his own reflections; he is deep in the secrets of the king. I was completely forgotten, he will think of me when I shall be necessary to him, I have seen that. My father is a charming man, notwithstanding his fifty years: he has a youthful figure, he is well built, he is blond, he has a style and a gracefulness which are exquisite; he has the countenance, at once speaking and reserved, of the diplomats; his nose is thin and long, his eyes are brown. What a handsome couple! How many singular thoughts have assailed me in seeing clearly that these two beings, equally noble, rich, superior, do not live together, have nothing in common but the name, and maintain the appearance of being united in the eyes of the world. The élite of the court and of diplomacy were there yesterday. In a few days, I am going to a ball in the house of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and I shall be presented to this world which I wish so much to know. A

dancing-master is to come every morning: I am to know how to dance in a month, under penalty of not going to the ball. Before the dinner, my mother came to see me about my governess. I have kept Miss Griffith, who was given to her by the English ambassador. This Miss is the daughter of a minister: her education is perfect, her mother was noble; she is thirty-six years old, she will teach me English. My Griffith is handsome enough to have pretensions; she is poor and proud, she is Scotch, she will be my chaperon; she will sleep in the chamber with Rose. Rose will be under Miss Griffith's orders. I saw immediately that I shall govern my governess. In the six days that we have been together she has perfectly comprehended that it is I alone who can take any interest in her; for myself, notwithstanding her statuesque countenance, I have perfectly comprehended that she will be very complacent for me. She seems to me a good creature, but discreet. I have never been able to know what was said between her and my mother.

Another piece of news which seems to me of slight importance! This morning, my father refused the post of minister which was offered him. Hence his preoccupation of the day before. He prefers an embassy, he said, to the wearinesses of public discussion. Spain smiles upon him. I learned this news at déjeuner, the only time of the day when my father, my mother and my brother meet in a sort of intimacy. The servants only come then when some one rings for them. All the rest of the time my brother is

absent as well as my father. My mother is dressing, she is only visible from two o'clock to four: at four o'clock she goes out for a promenade of an hour; she receives from six to seven when she does not dine out; then the evening is employed in pleasure, the theatre, balls, concerts, visits. In fact her life is so full, that I doubt if she has a quarter of an hour to herself. She must pass a very considerable length of time at her morning toilet, for she is divine at déjeuner, which is between eleven o'clock and noon. I am commencing to understand the sounds which are heard in her apartment,—she takes first a bath almost cold, and a cup of cold coffee with cream; then she dresses; she is never awakened before nine o'clock, excepting in extraordinary cases; in the summer there are horseback rides in the morning. At two o'clock, she receives a young man whom I have not yet seen. This is our family life. We meet each other at déjeuner and at dinner; but I am often alone with my mother at this latter repast. I foresee that more frequently still I shall dine alone in my apartment with Miss Griffith, as did my grandmother. My mother often dines out. I am no longer surprised at the little interest which my family take in me. My dear, at Paris, it requires heroism to love those who are near us, for we are not often by ourselves. How the absent are forgotten in this city! Still I have not yet set foot outside the house, I know nothing; I am waiting until I am uncountrified, until my appearance and my air shall be in harmony

with this world, the movement of which astonishes me, although as yet I have heard only its distant murmur. I have only been out in the garden. The performances begin at the Italiens in a few days. My mother has a box there. I am almost crazy with the desire to hear Italian music and to see a French opera. I am commencing to break the habits of the convent to take on those of the wordly life. I write to you in the evening up to the time I go to bed, which now is postponed till ten o'clock, the hour at which my mother goes out when she does not go to some theatre. There are a dozen theatres in Paris. My ignorance is crass, and I read a great deal, but I read indiscriminately. One book conducts me to another. I find the titles of several works on the cover of that which I have; but I have no one to guide me, so that I find some which are very wearisome. That which I have read of modern literature treats chiefly of love, the subject which occupies us so much, since all our destiny is made by man and for man; but how much these authors are below two young girls named the white lamb and the darling, Renée and Louise! Ah, dear angel, what poor events, what extravagance, and how unworthy is the expression of this sentiment! Two books, however, have pleased me strangely, the one is *Corinne* and the other *Adolphe*. In connection with this, I asked my father if I could see Madame de Staël. My mother, my father, and Alphonse commenced to laugh. Alphonse said:

"Where does she come from, then?"

My father replied:

"We are very stupid, she comes from the Carmelites."

"My daughter, Madame de Staël is dead," said the duchess to me gently.

"How can a woman be deceived?" I asked Miss Griffith when I finished *Adolphe*.

"Why, when she loves," said Miss Griffith to me.

Tell me then, Renée, could a man deceive us?—Miss Griffith has ended by perceiving that I am only half silly, that I have an unknown education, that which we have given to each other in reasoning indefinitely. She has understood that my ignorance relates only to exterior things. The poor creature has opened her heart to me. This laconic response, set in the balance against all imaginable misfortunes, has caused me a slight shudder. My Griffith has repeatedly warned me not to allow myself to be dazzled by anything in the world and to be suspicious of everything, principally of that which pleases me the most. She does not know and can tell me nothing further. This discourse is too monotonous. She is in this like that bird which has only one cry.

III

THE SAME TO THE SAME

December.

My dear, here I am ready to enter into the world; thus have I endeavored to be very foolish before

composing myself for it. This morning, after many trials, I have seen myself well and duly corseted, shod, laced, *coiffée,* dressed, adorned. I have done like the duelist before the combat,—I have exercised myself behind closed doors. I wish to see myself under arms, I very willingly found in myself a little conquering and triumphant air to which it would be necessary to surrender. I examined myself and judged myself. I passed in review all my forces, putting into practice this fine maxim of antiquity: "Know thyself!" I have had infinite pleasure in making my own acquaintance. Griffith alone was in the secret of my doll's play. I was at once the doll and the child. You think you know me? Not the least in the world!

Here, Renée, is the portrait of your sister formerly disguised as a Carmelite and now resuscitated as a light and worldly young woman. Provence excepted, I am one of the most beautiful persons in France. This appears to me to be the true summing up of this agreeable chapter. I have defects; but, if I were a man, I should love them. These defects come from the hopes which I give. When one has been admiring for fifteen days the exquisite roundness of the arms of a mother, and this mother is the Duchesse de Chaulieu, my dear, one is unhappy at seeing the thinness of her own arms; but there is consolation in finding the wrist fine, a certain suavity of lines in those hollows which one day a flesh like satin will come to dimple, to round and to model. The somewhat dried design of the

arms repeats itself in the shoulders. To tell the truth, I have no shoulders, but hard shoulder-blades which form two harsh planes. My figure is equally without suppleness, the sides are stiff. Ouf! I have told all. But these profiles are fine and firm, health bites with its lively and pure flame these nervous lines, life and a blue blood flow in waves under a transparent skin. Why, the very blondest daughter of Eve, the blonde, is a negress beside me! Why, I have the foot of a gazelle! Why, all the outlines are delicate, and I possess the correct features of a Greek design. The flesh tones are not blended, it is true, mademoiselle; but they are vivacious: I am a very pretty green fruit, and I have of it the green graciousness. In short, I resemble the figure which in the old missal of my aunt, rises from a violet-colored lily. My blue eyes are not stupid, they are proud, surrounded by two margins of living mother-of-pearl shaded by pretty little fibres and on which my long and crowded lashes resemble silken fringes. My forehead dazzles, my hair has the roots deliciously planted, it presents little waves of pale gold, darkened in the middle and from which escape a few mutinous hairs which assert with sufficient clearness that I am not a faded and fainting blonde, but a Southern blonde and full of blood, a blonde who strikes instead of allowing herself to be attacked. The hairdresser, did he not want to smooth it down into two bands and place on my forehead a pearl held by a golden chain, saying to me that I would have the style of the Middle Ages.

Know that I am not of an age to be in the Middle, and to put on an ornament which is intended to make more youthful!

My nose is thin, the nostrils are well cut and separated by a charming pink partition; it is imperious, mocking, and its extremity is too nervous to ever grow gross or to redden. My dear lamb, if all this is not enough to cause a young girl to be taken without a dot, I do not know myself. My ears have coquettish windings, a pearl at the end of each would seem yellow. My neck is long, it has that serpentine movement which gives so much majesty. In the shadow, its whiteness becomes golden. Ah! I have perhaps a somewhat large mouth, but it is so expressive, the lips are of such a beautiful color, the teeth laugh with so good a grace! And then, my dear, everything is in harmony,—there is a walk, there is a voice! One remembers the movements of the petticoats of her ancestress, who never equaled this. In short, I am beautiful and graceful.

According to my whim, I can laugh as we have often laughed and I would be respected,—there will be something indescribably striking in the dimples which the light fingers of Pleasantry will make in my white cheeks. I can lower my eye and give myself a heart of ice under my front of snow. I can offer the melancholy neck of the swan in posing as a Madonna, and the Virgins designed by the painters will be at a hundred degrees below me; I shall be higher than they in the heaven. A man

will be forced, to speak to me, to change his voice into music.

I am then armed at all points and can range the keyboard of coquetry from the gravest notes up to the most flute-like sound. It is an immense advantage not to be uniform. My mother is neither frolicsome nor virginal; she is exclusively worthy, imposing, she cannot issue from that but to become leonine; when she wounds, she cures with difficulty; I, I shall know how to wound and to cure. I am entirely different from my mother. Thus there will be no possible rivalry between us, unless we should come to dispute over the greater or less degree of perfection of our extreme ranges which resemble each other. I take after my father, he is fine and slender. I have the manners of my grandmother and her charming tone of voice, a voice from the head when it is forced, a melodious chest voice in the medium of the *tête-à-tête.*' It seems to me that it is only to-day that I have left the convent. I do not yet exist for the world, I am unknown to it. What a delicious moment! I belong to myself still, like a flower which has not been seen and which has just opened. Well, my angel, when I have walked about in my salon looking at myself, when I have seen the ingenuous possessions of the boarding-school girl all cast aside, my heart has experienced an inexpressible feeling,—regrets for the past, inquietude for the future, fears of the world, farewells to our pale marguerites innocently gathered, thoughtlessly stripped of their leaves; there was all of

that; but there were also those fantastic ideas which I send back into the depths of my soul, where I dare not descend and from whence they come.

My Renée, I have the trousseau of a bride! The whole is well arranged, perfumed in the drawers of cedar and in the lacquered front of a delicious *cabinet de toilette.* I have ribbons, shoes, gloves, everything in profusion. My father has graciously given me the jewels for a young girl,—a dressing-case, a dressing-glass, a perfuming pan, a fan, an umbrella, a book of prayers, a gold chain, a cashmere; he has promised to have me taught to ride horseback. Finally, I know how to dance! To-morrow, yes, to-morrow evening, I shall be presented. My toilet is a dress of white muslin. I shall have for headdress a garland of white roses *à la grecque.* I will put on my Madonna air,—I wish to be very stupid and to have the women on my side. My mother is a thousand leagues from what I am writing to you, she believes me incapable of reflection. If she read my letter, she would be stupid with astonishment. My brother honors me with a profound contempt, and continues to me the bounties of his indifference. He is a handsome man, but whimsical and melancholy. I have his secret: neither the duke nor the duchess have discovered it Although duke and young, he is jealous of his father, he is nothing in the government, he has no office at the Court, he has no occasion to say: "I must go to the Chamber." I am the only one in the house who has sixteen hours for reflection. My father is buried in

public affairs and in his pleasures, my mother is also occupied; no one reacts upon another in the household, everyone is always out, there is not enough time for living. I am curious to excess to know what invincible attraction the world possesses to keep you every evening from nine o'clock to two or three in the morning, to make you undergo such heavy expense and to support so many fatigues. In desiring to enter it, I do not imagine for myself such vast distances, similar intoxications; but in truth I forget that it is a question of Paris. Thus, then, people may live near each other, in the bosom of a family, and not know each other. A quasi-nun arrives, and in two weeks she perceives that which a statesman does not see in his own household. Perhaps he does see it, and there is a paternal feeling in his voluntary blindness. I will investigate this obscure corner

IV

THE SAME TO THE SAME

December 15.

Yesterday, at two o'clock, I went to take my promenade in the Champs-Élysées and in the Bois de Boulogne on one of those autumnal days such as we have so often admired on the banks of the Loire. I have finally seen Paris! The aspect of the Place Louis XV. is truly beautiful, but of that beauty which men create. I was very well arrayed, melancholy, though very well disposed to laugh, my

countenance pale under a charming hat, my arms crossed. I did not receive the least smile, I did not even make one poor little young man stand still stupefied, no one turned around to see me, and yet the carriage went with a slowness in harmony with my appearance. I am mistaken, a charming duke who passed suddenly turned his horse. This man who, alone of the whole public, saved my vanity, was my father, whose pride, as he said to me, was agreeably flattered. I met my mother, who with the end of her finger sent me a little salutation which resembled a kiss. My Griffith, who suspected no one, looked about her right and left. According to my ideas, a young person should always know where she directs her looks. I was furious. One man very seriously examined my carriage without paying any attention to me. This flatterer was probably a carriage-maker. I have deceived myself in the valuation of my powers,—beauty, that rare privilege which God alone can give, is then more common at Paris than I had supposed. The affected women were graciously saluted. At the flushed faces, men said: "There she is!" My mother was prodigiously admired. This enigma has an answer, and I will seek it. The men, my dear, seem to me in general very ugly. Those who are handsome are like bad copies of us. I do not know what fatal genius invented their costume, —it is surprisingly awkward when it is compared with those of the preceding centuries; it is without style, without color or poetry; it addresses itself

neither to the senses, nor to the spirit, nor to the eye, and it should be very inconvenient; it is without amplitude, curtailed. The hat particularly struck me,—it is a section of a column, it does not take the shape of the head; but it is, I have been told, easier to make a revolution than to make the hat graceful. Courage in France recoils at the idea of wearing a felt hat with a round crown, and for want of a day's bravery one goes ridiculously covered during a whole lifetime. And the French are said to be so light! The men are moreover perfectly horrible, no matter in what fashion they cover their heads. I saw only hard and fatigued faces, in which there is neither calm not tranquillity; the lines are harsh and the wrinkles announce thwarted ambitions, unhappy vanities. A fine forehead is rare.

"Ah! these are the Parisians!" I said to Miss Griffith.

"Pleasant men, and very clever ones," she replied to me.

I was silent. A single woman of thirty-six has plenty of indulgence in the bottom of her heart.

In the evening I went to the ball, and I kept myself by the side of my mother, who gave me her arm with a devotion that was well rewarded. The honors were all for her, I furnished the pretext for the most agreeable flatteries. She had the cleverness to make me dance with imbeciles who all spoke of the heat as if I had been frozen, and of the beauty of the ball as if I were blind. Not one of them

failed to go into ecstasies over a most strange, unheard-of, extraordinary, singular, grotesque thing, and that was to see me there for the first time. My toilet, which seemed to me ravishing in my little white and gold salon where I parade all alone, was scarcely noticeable in the midst of the marvelous dresses of the majority of the women. Each one of them had her faithful servitor, she observed him out of the corner of her eye; several of them were brilliant with a triumphant beauty, as was my mother. At a ball, a young person does not count, she is a dancing-machine. The men, with rare exceptions, are no better than those of the Champs-Élysées. They are worn, their features are without character, or rather they have all the same character. That proud and vigorous carriage which our ancestors have in their portraits, and in which physical strength is joined to moral strength, no longer exists. However, there was in this assembly one man of great talent who was noticeable among the throng for the beauty of his countenance, but he did not cause me the lively emotion which he should have communicated. I am not acquainted with his works, and he is not a gentleman born. Whatever may be the genius or the qualities of a bourgeois or of a man lately ennobled, I have not in my blood one solitary drop for him. Moreover, I found him so much occupied with himself, so little with others, that he made it seem to me as though we should be only things and not beings for these great seekers of ideas. When men of talent love,

they should no longer write, or they will not love. There is something in their brains which takes the precedence of their mistress. I seemed to see all this in the appearance of this man, who is, it is said, professor, speaker, author, and whom ambition makes the most assiduous servitor. I came to my decision immediately,—I considered it very unworthy of myself to be vexed with the world at my want of success, and I gave myself up to dancing without any cares. Moreover, I found pleasure in dancing. I heard a great deal of gossip without any point in it concerning unknown people; but perhaps it is necessary to know a great many things of which I am ignorant in order to appreciate it, for I saw most of the men and women taking a very lively pleasure in saying or hearing certain phrases. The world offers an enormous number of enigmas the answers to which seem difficult to find. There are in it multiplied intrigues. I have sufficiently keen eyes and a fine hearing; as to the understanding, you are acquainted with it, Mademoiselle de Maucombe!

I returned weary of it all and happy in this weariness. I very ingenuously described my feelings to my mother, in whose company I was, and who told me to make these sorts of confidences only to her.

"My dear little one," she added, "good taste consists as much in the recognition of those things concerning which one should be silent as in that of those things which one may say."

This recommendation enabled me to comprehend those feelings concerning which we should keep silence with all the world, even perhaps with our mother. I measured with one glance of the eye the vast field of feminine dissimulation. I can assure you, my dear lamb, that we will make, with all the effrontery of our innocence, two little gossips passably awake to what is going on. How much instruction in a finger placed upon the lips, in a word, in a look! I became excessively timid in a moment. What! not to be able to express the happiness that is naturally caused by the movements of the dance! "But," I said to myself, "what will then become of our sentiments?" I went to bed sad. I am still feeling keenly the results of this first encounter of my fresh and gay nature with the hard laws of the world. Already some of my white wool is left on the bushes by the roadside! Adieu, my angel.

V

RENÉE DE MAUCOMBE TO LOUISE DE CHAULIEU

October.

How much your letter moved me! affected me above all by the comparison of our destinies. In what a brilliant world are you going to live! in what a peaceful retreat shall I finish my obscure career! Two weeks after my arrival at the Château de Maucombe, of which I have already told you too much to tell you any more, and where I found my

chamber almost in the same state in which I left it, but from which I have been able to comprehend the sublime landscape of the valley of Gémenos which as a child I looked at without seeing anything there, my father and my mother, accompanied by my two brothers, took me to dine at the house of one of our neighbors, an old Monsieur de l'Estorade, a gentleman become very rich as one becomes rich in the provinces, through avarice. This old man had not been able to save his only son from the rapacity of Bonaparte; after having kept him from the conscription, he was obliged to send him to the army in 1813, as a guard of honor: since Leipsic, the old Baron de l'Estorade had never heard from him. Monsieur de Montriveau, whom Monsieur de l'Estorade went to see in 1814, declared to him that he had seen him taken by the Russians. Madame de l'Estorade died of grief after making fruitless inquiries in Russia. The baron, a very Christian old man, practised that fine theological virtue which we cultivated at Blois—Hope! This virtue caused him to see his son in dreams, and he accumulated his revenues for the son; he took charge of the share of this son in the inheritance which came to him from the family of the late Madame de l'Estorade. No one had the courage to jest with this old man. I ended by divining that the unhoped-for return of this son was the cause of mine. Who would have said to us that, during the vagabond wanderings of our imaginations, my intended was slowly traversing on foot Russia, Poland, and Germany?

His evil destiny only ceased at Berlin, where the French minister facilitated his return to France. Monsieur de l'Estorade, the father, a little gentleman of Provence, with a fortune of about ten thousand francs' income, has not a name sufficiently well known in Europe for much interest to be taken in the Chevalier de l'Estorade, whose name was so peculiarly appropriate to the adventurer.

Twelve thousand francs, the annual product of the property of Madame de l'Estorade, accumulated with the paternal savings, make for the poor guard of honor a considerable fortune in Provence, something like two hundred and fifty thousand francs, in addition to his real estate. The goodman L'Estorade had bought, the evening of the day on which he was again to see the Chevalier, a fine estate badly administered, where he proposed to set out ten thousand mulberry trees which he had purposely grown in his nursery, foreseeing this purchase. The baron, on finding his son again had but one thought, to marry him, and to marry him to a noble young girl. My father and my mother had adopted for my sake their neighbor's idea as soon as the old man had announced to them his intention to take Renée de Maucombe without a dot, and to recognize for her in the contract all the property which might come to the aforesaid Renée in their inheritance. At the time of his majority, my younger brother, Jean de Maucombe, acknowledged having received from his parents an advance on the inheritance equal to a third of the heritage. This

is how the noble families of Provence elude the provisions of the infamous Civil Code of the Sieur de Bonaparte, which would cause to be sent to the convents as many noble daughters as it married. The French nobility is, according to the little which I have heard said on this subject, very much divided in opinion on these grave matters.

This dinner, my dear mignonne, was an interview between your lamb and the exile. Let us proceed in due order. The people of the Comte de Maucombe had arrayed themselves in their old embroidered liveries, with laced hats; the coachman had put on his big top boots; there were five of us in the old carriage, and we arrived in great state about two o'clock, to dine at three, at the country house in which dwelt the Baron de l'Estorade. The father-in-law has no château but a simple house in the country, situated at the foot of one of our hills, at the opening of our beautiful valley, the pride of which is certainly the old Castle of Maucombe. This country house is a country house,—four walls of pebbles united by a yellowish cement, covered with hollow tiles of a fine red. The roofs bend under the weight of this brick-field. The windows, pierced through the walls without any symmetry, have enormous shutters painted yellow. The garden which surrounds this habitation is a Provençal garden, inclosed in low walls built of big round pebbles laid in courses, and in which the genius of the mason displays itself in the manner in which he disposes them alternately inclined or upright,—the

facing of plaster which covers them is falling in places. The domanial appearance of this country house is owing to an iron gate at the entrance, on the road. There was long weeping before this gate was acquired; it is so thin that it reminds me of Sister Angélique. The house is approached by a flight of stone steps, the door is decorated with a little portico which a peasant of the Loire would not have for his elegant house in white stone with a blue roof, on which the sun glitters. The garden, the surroundings, are horribly dusty, the trees are burnt. It is easy to see, that, since a long time, the life of the baron has consisted in rising, in going to bed and in rising again the next day without any other care than that of piling sou upon sou. He eats what his two domestics eat, they are a Provençal youth and his wife's old femme de chambre. The rooms have but little furniture. However, the house of L'Estorade was rejuvenated and adorned, —it had emptied its closets, convoked the ban and the arrière-ban of its serfs for this dinner, which was served to us in old silver, blackened and dented. The exile, my dear mignonne, is like the iron gate, very thin! He is pale, he has suffered, he is taciturn. At thirty-seven, he looks as though he were fifty years old. The ebony of his ex-handsome young man's hair is mingled with white like the wing of a lark. His fine blue eyes are hollow; he is a little deaf, which makes him resemble the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance; nevertheless, I have graciously consented to become Madame de

l'Estorade, to permit myself to be given a dot of two hundred and fifty thousand francs, but on the express condition of being mistress, of arranging the country house and of making of it a park. I have formally exacted from my father a condition that he shall concede to me a small supply of water which can be brought from Maucombe here. In a month I shall be Madame de l'Estorade, for I pleased, my dear. After the snows of Siberia, a man is very well disposed to find merit in those black eyes, which, as you said, would ripen the fruits that I looked at. Louis de l'Estorade appears to be excessively happy to marry *the beautiful Renée de Maucombe*, such is the glorious appellation of your friend. Whilst you are making ready to harvest the pleasures of that much more vast existence, that of a Demoiselle de Chaulieu in Paris where you will reign, your poor lamb, Renée, that daughter of the desert, has fallen from the Empyrean into which we lifted ourselves to the common realities of a destiny simple as that of an Easter daisy. Yes, I have sworn to myself to console this young man without youth, who passed from the maternal lap to that of war, and from the joys of his country house to the ice and to the labors of Siberia. The uniformity of my coming days will be varied by the humble pleasures of the country. I will continue the oasis of the valley of Gémenos around my house, which shall be majestically shaded with beautiful trees. I shall have lawns always green in Provence, I shall make my park ascend as far as the

hill, I will place on the most elevated point some pretty kiosk from which I may see, perhaps, the brilliant Mediterranean. The orange, the lemon tree, the richest productions of botany shall embellish my retreat, and I will there be a *materfamilias*. A poesy natural, indestructible, shall environ us. While remaining faithful to my duties, no unhappiness is to be feared. My Christian sentiments are shared by my father-in-law and by the Chevalier de l'Estorade. Ah! mignonne, I see life like one of those great French roads, smooth and pleasant, shaded with trees eternal. There will not be two Bonapartes in this century: I shall be able to keep my children, if I have any, bring them up, make of them men; I will enjoy life for them. If you do not fail in your destiny, you who are to be the wife of some powerful one of the earth, the children of your Renée will have an active protection. Farewell then, for my part at least, to the romances and the fantastic situations in which we made ourselves the heroines. I know already in advance the history of my life: my life will be traversed by the great events of the teething of the Messieurs de l'Estorade, by their nursing, by the damage which they will make in my bushes and in my person,— to embroider their bonnets, to be loved and admired by a poor man who is suffering, at the entrance of the valley of Gémenos, there are my pleasures. Perhaps one day the countrywoman will go to live in Marseilles during the winter; but even then she will only appear on the narrow stage of the

provinces, in which the side-scenes are not perilous. I shall have nothing to fear, not even one of those admirations which can render us proud. We will interest ourselves very much in silkworms for which we shall have mulberry leaves to sell. We shall know the strange vicissitudes of the provincial life and the tempests of a household without possible quarrel: Monsieur de l'Estorade announces his formal intention to allow himself to be ruled by his wife. Now, as I will do nothing to keep him in this wisdom, it is probable that he will persist in it. You will be, my dear Louise, the romantic half of my existence. Therefore, relate to me well all your adventures, paint me the balls, the fêtes, tell me all about how you are dressed, what flowers crowned your beautiful blonde hair, and the words of the men and their manners. You will be two to listen, to dance, to feel the end of your fingers pressed. I would wish much to ámuse myself at Paris, whilst you will be mother of a family at La Crampade, such is the name of our country house. Poor man, who thought to marry only one woman! Will he perceive that there are two? I am commencing to say foolishnesses. As I can only do them by proxy, I stop. Therefore, a kiss on each of thy cheeks, my lips are still those of a young girl—he only dared to take my hand. Oh! we are of a respectfulness and a conventionality sufficiently disquieting. Well, I am recommencing—. Adieu, dear.

P. S.—I have just opened your third letter. My

dear, I can dispose of about a thousand francs,—spend them for me in those pretty things which are not found in these surroundings, nor even at Marseilles. In going around for yourself think of your recluse of La Crampade. Think that, neither on one side nor the other, have the grandparents any people of taste in Paris to make their purchases. I will reply later to this letter.

VI

DON FELIPE HÉNAREZ TO DON FERNAND

Paris, September.

The date of this letter will inform you, my brother, that the head of your house is not in any danger. If the massacre of our ancestors in the Court of the Lions converted us despite ourselves into Spaniards and Christians, it has left us the prudence of the Arabs; and perhaps I have been indebted for my safety to the blood of Abencerrage which still flows in my veins. Fear rendered Ferdinand so good an actor, that Valdez believed in his protestations. Had it not been for me, this poor admiral would have been lost. The Liberals will never know what a king really is. But the character of this Bourbon has been known to me for a long time: the oftener that His Majesty assured us of his protection, the more he excited my suspicion. A true Spaniard has no need to repeat his promises. Who talks too much wishes to deceive. Valdez

embarked on an English vessel. As for myself, when the destinies of my beloved Spain were ruined in Andalusia, I wrote to the superintendent of my property in Sardinia to take measures for my safety. Some skilful coral fishers were waiting for me with a bark at a point of the coast. When Ferdinand was recommending to the French my capture, I was in my barony of Macumer, in the midst of bandits who defy all the laws and all vengeances. The last Hispano-Moorish House of Granada had again found the African deserts, even to a Saracen horse, in a domain which came to it from the Saracens. The eyes of these bandits gleamed with joy and with a savage pride when they learned that they were protecting against the vendetta of the King of Spain the Duke of Soria, their master, a Hénarez indeed, the first who had come to visit them since the time when the island had belonged to the Moors,—they who the day before feared my justice! Twenty-two carbines were ready to level at Ferdinand the Bourbon, that son of a race still unknown in the day when the Abencerrages arrived as conquerors on the banks of the Loire. I thought to be able to live on the revenues of these immense domains, of which we have unhappily thought so little; but my sojourn demonstrated to me my errors and the truthfulness of the reports of Queverdo. The poor man had twenty-two men's lives at my service, and not a *real;* savannahs of twenty thousand acres in extent and not a house; virgin forests and not a piece of furniture! A million piastres and the presence

of the master during half a century would be necessary to bring into a state of productiveness these magnificent lands: I will think of it in the future. The vanquished reflect during their flight, on themselves and on their lost cause. When I saw this handsome corpse defaced by the monks, my eyes were filled with tears: I recognized in it the sorrowful future of Spain. I heard at Marseilles of the end of Riégo. I reflected sorrowfully that my life also would end in a martyrdom, but one obscure and long. Could that be said to be life which would neither consecrate itself to a country, or live for a woman! To love, to conquer, this double aspect of the same thought was the law engraved on our sabres, written in letters of gold on the vaults of our palaces, incessantly repeated in the jets of water which mount in fountains in our marble basins. But this law uselessly imparts fanaticism to my heart: the sabre is broken, the palace is in ashes, the living spring is absorbed by the sterile sands.

This then is my testament.

Don Fernand, you will understand why I bridle your ardor in ordering you to remain faithful to the *rey netto.* As your brother and your friend, I entreat you to obey; as your master, I command it. You will go to the king, you will ask of him my grandeurs and my property, my office and my titles; he will hesitate perhaps, he will make a few royal grimaces; but you will say to him that you are beloved of Marie Hérédia, and that Marie can only

espouse the Duke of Soria. You will then see him shake with joy: the immense fortune of the Hérédias will prevent him from consummating my ruin: it will appear to him thus complete, you will immediately receive all my spoils. You will espouse Marie: I had surprised the secret of your mutual love so valiantly struggled against. Thus I have prepared the old count for this substitution. Marie and I, we bowed to the conventionalities and to the wishes of our fathers. You are as handsome as a love-child, I am as ugly as a grandee of Spain; you are beloved, I am the object of an unavowed repugnance; you will soon have overcome the slight resistance that my misfortune will perhaps inspire in this noble Spanish lady. As Duke of Soria, your predecessor will not wish to cost you a regret nor deprive you of a *maravedi.* As the jewels of Marie can fill the place which my mother's diamonds would have occupied in your house, you will send me these diamonds, which will be sufficient to assure the independence of my life, by my nurse, the old Urraca, the only person whom I wish to keep of my household retinue: she alone knows how to prepare my chocolate.

During our short revolution, my constant labors reduced my living to the simplest necessities, and the salary of my office provided for them. You will find the revenues of these last two years in the hands of your superintendent. This sum belongs to me: the marriage of a Duke of Soria will involve great expenses, we will then share them. You will

not refuse the wedding present of your brother the bandit. Moreover, such is my desire. The barony of Macumer, not being under the hand of the King of Spain, remains to me and leaves me the privilege of having a country and a name, if it should happen that I should wish to become something.

God be praised, this business is finished, the House of Soria is saved!

At the moment when I am no longer anything but the Baron de Macumer, the French cannon announce the entry of the Duc d'Angoulême. You will understand, monsieur, why I interrupt my letter here—

October.

When I arrived here, I had not ten quadruples.* A statesman, is he not indeed little when, in the midst of catastrophes which he has not prevented, he displays an egotistical forethought? To the vanquished Moors, a horse and the desert; to the Christians deceived in their hopes, the convent and a few pieces of gold. However, my resignation is as yet nothing but weariness. I am not sufficiently near to the monastery to no longer think of living. Ozalga gave to me at a great risk some letters of recommendation, among which there was one for a bookseller who is to our compatriots here that which Galignani is to the English. This man procured for me eight scholars at three francs a lesson. I go to my pupils every other day, I have thus four

*_Quadruple_, Spanish coin of the value of two pistoles, about $8.75.

lessons a day and earn twelve francs, a sum much superior to my needs. When Urraca arrives I will make the happiness of some proscribed Spaniard by passing over my pupils to him. I am lodged in the Rue Hillerin-Bertin, in the house of a poor widow who takes boarders. My chamber faces south and looks on a little garden. I do not hear any noise, I see the verdure and I do not expend in all more than a piastre a day; I am quite astonished at the calm and pure pleasures which I taste in this life of Dionysius at Corinth. From the rising of the sun up to ten o'clock, I smoke and take my chocolate, seated at my window, looking at two Spanish plants, a genista which arises through the masses of a jessamine,—gold on a white ground, a picture which will always thrill a scion of the Moors. At ten o'clock, I go out and give my lessons up to four o'clock. At that hour I return to dine, I smoke and I read afterwards until my bedtime. I can lead for a long time this life, which mingles work and meditation, solitude and the world. Do not have any apprehensions, Fernand, my abdication has been accomplished without any afterthought; it is not followed by any regret like that of Charles V., by any desire to renew the struggle like that of Napoléon. Five nights and five days have passed since my last will and testament, reflection has made of them five centuries. Grandeur, titles, worldy goods, are for me as if they had never been. Now that the barrier of respect which separated us has fallen, I can, dear child, open to you my heart.

This heart, which gravity covers with an impenetrable armor, is full of tenderness and of devotions without occupation; but no woman has ever divined it, not even she who, from the cradle, was destined for me. This is the secret of my ardent political life. In default of a mistress, I adored Spain. Spain also escaped from me! Now that I am no longer anything, I can contemplate the *I* destroyed, ask myself why life came to it and when it will leave it? why the chivalrous race *par excellence* has thrown into its last scion its first virtues, its African love, its warm poetry? if the seed should preserve its rough envelope without pushing out any stem, without dispensing its Oriental perfume from above a radiant calix? What crime had I committed before being born that I have never inspired love in anyone? Have I been then from my birth an ancient wreck destined to be cast away on an arid shore? I find in my soul the paternal deserts, lit by a sun which burns them without permitting anything to grow there. Proud remnant of a fallen race, useless strength, lost love, old young man, I will wait then where I am, better than anywhere else, the last favor of death. Alas! under this cloudy sky, no spark will come to reanimate the flame in all these ashes. Thus could I say for my last word, as did Jesus Christ: "My God, why hast thou forsaken me!" A terrible speech which no one has dared to fathom.

Judge, Fernand, how happy I am to live again in you and in Marie! I shall contemplate you

henceforth with the pride of a creator satisfied with his work. Love each other well and always, do not give me any griefs: a discord between you would distress me more than it would you yourselves. Our mother had foreseen that events would one day accomplish her hopes. Perhaps a mother's desire is a contract exchanged between herself and God. Was she not, moreover, one of those mysterious beings who can communicate with Heaven and who bring from there a vision of the future! How many times have I not read in the wrinkles of her forehead that she desired for Fernand the honors and the estates of Felipe! I said so to her, she replied to me by two tears showing me the wounds of her heart which was entirely devoted to us both, to one as to the other, but which an invincible love gave to you alone. Thus will her joyful shade float over your heads when you bow before the altar. Will you come at last to caress your Felipe, Donna Clara? you see him,—he yields to your beloved everything, even to the young girl whom you placed regretfully on his knees. That which I am doing pleases the women, the dead, the king, God wishes it, do not then disarrange anything of it, Fernand: obey and keep silent.

P. S.—Recommend to Urraca not to speak of me otherwise than as Monsieur Hénarez. Do not say a word of me to Marie. You should be the only living being who knows the secrets of the last Christianized Moor, in whose veins will perish the

blood of the great family born in the desert, and which is to end in solitude. Adieu.

VII

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO RENÉE DE MAUCOMBE

January, 1824.

How, so soon married! but do people take each other in this manner? At the end of a month, you promise yourself to a man, without being acquainted with him, without even knowing him. This man may be deaf, there are so many ways of being so! he may be unhealthy, wearisome, insupportable. Do you not see, Renée, what they are going to do with you? You are necessary to them to continue the glorious house of L'Estorade, and that is all. You are going to become a provincial. Are these our mutual promises? In your place, I would rather go and drift around the Hyères Islands in a launch until an Algerian corsair carried me off and sold me to the Grand Seigneur; I would become sultana, then some day Validé; I would set the Seraglio topsy-turvy, and as much while I was young as when I was old. You come out of one convent to enter into another! I know you, you are cowardly, you are going to enter a household with the submission of a lamb. I will give you some advice, you will come to Paris, we will here set the men wild and we will become queens. Your husband, my

beautiful lamb, can, in three years from now, get himself elected deputy. I know now what a deputy is, I will explain it to you; you can play very well on this machine; you can live in Paris and there become, as my mother says, a woman *à la mode*. Oh! I certainly will not leave you in your country house!

Monday.

It is now two weeks, my dear, that I have been living a fashionable life,—one evening at the Italiens, the other at the Grand Opera, from there always to a ball. Ah! the world is a fairy spectacle. The music of the Italiens seemed to me ravishing, and, while my soul was swimming in a divine pleasure, I was watched through the opera-glasses, admired; but with only one look I could make the most courageous young man lower his eyes. I have seen there such charming young persons; well, not one of them has pleased me; none has caused me the emotion which I feel when hearing Garcia in his magnificent duet with Pelegrini in *Othello*. Mon Dieu! how that Rossini must have been jealous, to have so well expressed jealousy! What a cry that of *Il mio cor si divide!* I am talking Greek to you, you have not heard Garcia, but you know how jealous I am! What a sorrowful dramatist is that Shakespeare! Othello conquers glory, he gains victory, he commands, he parades, he promenades himself, leaving Desdemona in her corner; and Desdemona, who sees him preferring

the stupidities of public life to her, does not complain? This sheep is worthy of death. Let him whom I shall deign to love dare to do anything else besides loving me! For my part, I am for the long trials of ancient chivalry. I consider as very impertinent and very stupid that clown of a young lord who took it ill that his sovereign lady sent him to seek her glove among the lions,—she reserved for him doubtless some fine flower of love, and he lost it after having merited it, the insolent! But I chatter as though I had no great news to reveal to you! My father will doubtless go to represent the king, our master, at Madrid: I say our master, for I shall make part of the embassy. My mother desires to remain here, my father will take me with him so as to have a woman in his household.

My dear, you see in this only something very simple, yet nevertheless, there is in it something monstrous: in two weeks I have discovered the secrets of the household. My mother would follow my father to Madrid, if he would take Monsieur Canalis as Secretary of Embassy; but the king designates the secretaries, the duke dare not go contrary to the king, who is very absolute, nor vex my mother; and this great politician believes that he has solved the difficulties in leaving the duchess here. Monsieur de Canalis, the great poet of the day, is the young man who cultivates my mother's society, and who doubtless studies diplomacy with her from three o'clock to five. Diplomacy must be a fine thing, for he is as assiduous as a gambler at the

Bourse. Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré, our eldest, solemn, cold, and fantastic, would be eclipsed by his father at Madrid, he remains in Paris. Miss Griffith knows moreover, that Alphonse is in love with a danseuse at the Opera. How can one love legs and pirouettes? We have noticed that my brother is present at the performances when Tullia dances, he applauds the steps of this creature and leaves immediately afterwards. I think that two daughters in one house would make more ravages there than a pestilence. As to my second brother, he is with his regiment, I have not yet seen him. This is how I am destined to be the Antigone of an Ambassador of His Majesty. Perhaps I shall be married in Spain, and perhaps my father's idea is to marry me there without a dot, absolutely as you have been married to the remnant of the old Guard of Honor. My father proposed to me to follow him and offered me his teacher of Spanish.

"You wish," I said to him, "to have me make some marriages in Spain?"

For all reply he honored me with a shrewd look. He has amused himself for the last few days with tormenting me at déjeuner, he studies me and I dissimulate; thus I have, as father and as ambassador, *in petto*, cruelly mystified him. Did he not take me for a silly? He asked me what I thought of such a young man and of certain demoiselles whom I have met in several houses. I replied to him by the most stupid discussion on the color of the hair, on the difference of the figures, on the physiognomy of the

young persons. My father seemed disappointed to find me so vacant, he blamed himself inwardly for having interrogated me.

"However, *mon père,*" I added, "I do not say what I really think,—my mother has recently made me fear to appear unseemly in speaking of my impressions."

"In your own family, you can express yourself without fear," replied my mother.

"Well," I resumed, "up to the present, young people have appeared to me to be more interested than interesting, more occupied with themselves than with us; but they have, in fact, very little dissimulation,—they put off in a moment the expression which they have assumed to speak to us, thinking doubtless that we do not know how to use our eyes. The man who speaks to us is the lover, the man who no longer speaks to us is the husband. As to the young women, they are so false that it is impossible to judge of their character otherwise than by that of their dance, it is only their figure and their movements which do not lie. I have above all been frightened at the brutality of the fine world. When it is a question of supper, there takes place—due allowance being made for proportion—things which give me an idea of the popular outbursts. Politeness conceals only very imperfectly the general egotism. I imagined to myself the world as very different. Women in it are counted for very little, and perhaps this is a remnant of the doctrines of Bonaparte."

"Armande is making astonishing progress," said my mother.

"*Ma mère,* do you think that I am always going to ask if Madame de Staël is dead?"

My father smiled and rose.

Saturday.

My dear, I have not told you all. This is what I keep from you. Of that love which we imagined should be profoundly hidden I have not seen any sign anywhere. I have indeed surprised some looks rapidly exchanged in the salons; but what pale ones! Our love, that world of marvels, of beautiful dreams, of delicious realities, and of sorrows answering each other, those smiles which light up all nature, those words which ravish, that happiness always given, always received, those sadnesses caused by separation and those joys so prodigally given by the presence of the beloved one!—of all that, nothing. Where do all these splendid flowers of the soul have birth? Who lies? we or the world? I have already seen youths, men by hundreds, and not one of them has caused me the least emotion; they might have testified to me their admiration and devotion, they might have fought for me, I would have surveyed it all with an unmoved eye. Love, my dear, relates to a phenomenon so rare, that one can live through life without encountering the being to whom nature has imparted the power of rendering us happy. This reflection causes us to shudder, for, if this

being should be encountered late, what would you say?

Within the last few days, I have begun to be terrified at our destiny, to understand why so many women have sad countenances under the layer of vermilion which is given them by the false joys of a festival. Marriages are made by chance, and you have been married in this manner. Storms of thoughts have passed through my soul. To be loved always in the same manner and yet differently, to be loved as much after ten years of happiness as on the first day! Such a love is worth years: it is necessary that it should be desired for a very long time, that it should have awakened many curiosities and satisfied them, that it should have excited many sympathies and responded to them. Are there then laws for the creations of the heart, as for those of the visible creations of nature? Can gaiety maintain itself? In what proportion should love mingle its tears and its pleasures? The cold combinations of the funereal, equal, permanent life of the convent formerly seemed to me possible; while the richness, the magnificence, the tears, the delights, the fêtes, the joys, the pleasures of equal love partaken, permitted, seemed to me impossible. I do not see any place in this city for the sweetnesses of love, for those holy walks under the elm, in the light of the full moon, when it glitters on the waters and when one resists prayers. Rich, young, and beautiful, I have only to love, love might become my whole life, my sole occupation: well, for three

months that I have been coming and going with an impatient curiosity, I have encountered nothing among these brilliant, eager, sprightly looks. No voice has moved me, no regard has illuminated for me this world. Music only has filled my soul, it alone has been for me that which our friendship is. I have remained sometimes for an hour at my window in the night, looking at the garden, calling up events, demanding of them the unknown source from which they came. I have sometimes gone out in a carriage to drive, getting out to walk in the Champs-Élysées in imagining that a man, that he who would re-awaken my torpid soul, would arrive, would follow me, would look at me; but on those days I have seen the street jugglers, the gingerbread sellers and the mountebanks, passers-by hurrying to attend to their affairs, or lovers who shunned all looks, and I was tempted to stop them and to say to them: "You who are happy, tell me what is love?" But I restrained these foolish thoughts, I got into the carriage again and I promised myself to remain an old maid. Love is certainly an incarnation, and how many conditions does it not require in order that it should take place! We are not certain of always being in accord with ourselves, what would it be with two? God alone can solve this problem. I commence to think that I shall return to the convent. If I remain in the world, I shall do things which will resemble stupidities, for it is impossible for me to accept that which I see. Everything wounds my

delicacies, the manners and customs of my soul, or my secret thoughts. Ah! my mother is the most happy woman in the world, she is adored by her great little Canalis. My angel, I am assailed by horrible desires to know what passes between my mother and this young man. Griffith has had, she says, all these thoughts; she has had a strong desire to leap at the faces of the women whom she saw happy; she has disparaged them, rent them. According to her, virtue consists in burying all these thoughts of savageries in the bottom of the heart. What is then the bottom of the heart? A depository of everything that we have of evil. I am very much humiliated not to have found an adorer. I am a young girl to be married, but I have brothers, a family, parents who are very sensitive. Ah! if that is the reason of the restraint of the men, they are very cowardly. The rôle of Chimène, in *Le Cid*, and that of the Cid filled me with delight. What an admirable theatre-piece! Come, farewell.

VIII

THE SAME TO THE SAME

January.

We have for instructor a poor refugee forced to conceal himself in consequence of his participation in the Revolution which the Duke d'Angoulême suppressed; a triumph to which we were indebted for some brilliant festivals. Although liberal and

doubtless bourgeois, this man interested me: I imagined that he had been condemned to death. I made him talk to discover his secret, but he is of Castilian taciturnity, proud as if he were Gonzalva of Cordova, and, nevertheless, of an angelic gentleness and patience; his pride is not displayed like that of Miss Griffith, it is all inward; he causes that which is due him to be rendered him by fulfilling his duties to us, and keeps us at a distance from him by the respect which he testifies to us. My father pretends that there is a good deal of the grand seigneur in the Sieur Hénarez, whom he calls, between ourselves, Don Hénarez by way of jest. When I allowed myself to address him thus, a few days ago, this man lifted to me his eyes, which he usually keeps lowered, and launched at me two glances which amazed me; my dear, he has certainly the finest eyes in the world. I asked him if I had vexed him in any way, and he said to me then in his sublime and grandiose Spanish tongue:

"Mademoiselle, I come here only to teach you Spanish."

I felt myself humiliated, I blushed, I was about to reply to him by some fine impertinence, when I remembered what our dear mother in God had said to us, and I then replied to him:

"If you should have to correct me in anything whatever, I should be obliged to you."

He was moved, the blood colored his olive skin, he answered me in a voice that trembled slightly:

"Religion should teach you better than I should be able to, to respect great misfortunes. If I were a *Don* in Spain, and had lost everything at the triumph of Ferdinand VII., your jest would be a cruelty; but, if I am only a poor teacher of languages, is it not an atrocious mockery? Neither is worthy of a noble young girl."

I took his hand saying to him:

"I will invoke also religion to pray you to forget my wrong."

He lowered his head, opened my Don Quixote and sat down. This little incident caused me more emotion than all the compliments, the looks and the phrases which I have received during the evening in which I have been the most courted. During the lesson, I looked attentively at this man, who allowed himself to be examined without knowing it: he never lifts his eyes to me. I discovered that our instructor, whom we supposed to be forty years old, was young; he cannot be more than twenty-six or twenty-eight. My governess, to whom I abandoned him, caused me to remark the beauty of his black hair and that of his teeth, which are like pearls. As to his eyes, they are at once of velvet and of fire. That is all, he is for the rest little and ugly. The Spaniards have been described to us as not very clean; but he is extremely well cared for, his hands are whiter than his face; his back is slightly stooped; his head is enormous and of an odd shape; his ugliness, sufficiently spiritual moreover, is aggravated by the marks of the small-pox which

have pitted his visage; his forehead is very prominent, his eyebrows join and are too heavy, they give him a hard appearance which repels sympathy. He has the grim and unhealthy aspect which distinguishes the children that are not destined to live and who owe their lives only to infinite care, like sister Martha. In short, as my father says, he has the mask somewhat softened of Cardinal Ximenes. My father does not like him, he feels constrained with him. The manners of our instructor have a natural dignity which seems to disquiet the dear duke; he cannot suffer superiority in any form near him. As soon as my father knows Spanish, we will set out for Madrid. Two days after the lesson which I had received, when Hénarez returned, I said to him to indicate to him a sort of gratitude:

"I do not doubt that you have left Spain in consequence of political events; if my father is sent there, as it is said, we shall be in the way of rendering you some service and of obtaining your pardon, in case you have been condemned."

"It is in the power of no one to oblige me," he replied.

"How, Monsieur," I said to him, "is it because you do not wish to accept any protection, or because it is impossible?"

"Both," he said bowing, and with an accent which reduced me to silence.

My father's blood boiled in my veins. This haughtiness revolted me, and I left the Sieur Hénarez

alone. However, my dear, there is something fine in not wishing to receive anything from others. "He will not accept even our friendship," I thought in conjugating a verb. There I stopped, and I repeated to him the thought which occurred to me, but in Spanish. The Hénarez replied to me very courteously that the feelings required an equality which was not to be found in this case, and that therefore this question was useless.

"Do you understand equality as relative to the reciprocity of feelings or to the difference of ranks?" I asked him to endeavor to draw him out of his gravity, which made me impatient.

He lifted once more his redoubtable eyes and I lowered mine. Dear, this man is an insolvable enigma. He seemed to ask me if my words were a declaration: there was in his look a happiness, a pride, an anguish of uncertainty which constricted my heart. I understood that these coquetries, which are in France esteemed at their just value, assume a dangerous signification with a Spaniard, and I withdrew a little stupidly into my shell. When the lesson was finished, he saluted me throwing upon me a look full of humble prayers, and which said: "Do not amuse yourself with an unfortunate." This sudden contrast with his grave and dignified manners made a lively impression upon me. Is it not horrible to think and to say? it seems to me that there are treasures of affection in this man.

IX

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU

December.

Everything is said and everything is done, my dear child, it is Madame de l'Estorade who writes to you; but there is nothing changed between us, there is only one young girl the less. Do not be disturbed, I thought over my consent, and I did not give it foolishly. My life is now determined. The certainty of proceeding in a designated road accords equally well with my spirit and my character. A great moral force has corrected for all time that which we call the chances of life. We have grounds to make valuable, a dwelling to ornament, to embellish; I have an interior to conduct and to render pleasant, a man to reconcile with life. I shall have without doubt a family to take care of, children to bring up. What do you desire! ordinary life could not be anything great or excessive. Certainly, the immense desires which expand the soul and the mind do not enter into these combinations, apparently at least. Who prevents me from sending to drift on the sea of the infinite those embarkations which we once launched on it? Nevertheless, do not think that the humble things to which I devote myself are exempt from passion. The task of bringing to believe in happiness a poor man who has been the sport of the tempest is a noble work,

and will be sufficient to modify the monotony of my existence. I have not been able to see that I should give way to sorrow, and I have seen good to be done. Between ourselves, I do not love Louis de l'Estorade with that love which makes the heart beat when one hears a step, which moves us profoundly at the least sound of a voice, or when an ardent regard envelops us; but he does not in the least displease me, nevertheless. What shall I do, you would say to me, with that instinct for sublime things, with those great thoughts which united us and which are in us? Yes, this is what has preoccupied me. Well, is it not a great thing to hide them, to employ them, unknown to all, for the happiness of a family, to make of them the means of the happiness of beings who are confided to us and to whom we belong? The season during which these faculties are at their highest development is very limited with women, it will soon be passed; and, if my life has not been great, it will have been calm, united and without vicissitudes. We are born with certain endowments, we can choose between love and maternity. Well, I have chosen, —I will make my divinities of my children and my Eldorado of this corner of the earth. This is all I can say to you to-day. I thank you for all the things which you have sent me. Look over my orders, the list of which is added to this letter. I wish to live in an atmosphere of luxury and of elegance, and to have of the province only that which it can offer of the delightful. In remaining in solitude,

a woman can never become provincial, she remains herself. I rely greatly on your devotion to keep me informed of all the things of the world. In his enthusiasm, my father-in-law refuses me nothing and turns his house upside down. We are going to have workmen from Paris and we will modernize everything.

X

MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE

January.

O Renée, you have saddened me for several days! So, that delicious body, that proud and handsome countenance, those manners so naturally elegant, that soul full of precious gifts, those eyes in which the soul quenches its thirst as at a living source of love, that heart filled with exquisite delicacies, that wide spirit, all those so rare faculties, those products of nature and of our mutual education, those treasures from which should issue for passion and for desire unique riches, poems, hours which should have been worth years, pleasures to render a man the slave of a single graceful movement,—all that is to be lost in the tediousness of a common and vulgar marriage, to be effaced in the emptiness of a life which will become to you wearisome! I hate in advance the children which you will have; they will be badly constituted. Everything is foreseen in your life: you will have neither

to hope, nor to fear, nor to suffer. And if you should encounter, in some day of splendor, a being who will awaken you from a slumber to which you are going to give yourself up?—Ah! I have shuddered at this thought. At least, you have a friend. You will be without doubt the spirit of this valley, you will initiate yourself into all its beauties, you will live with this nature, you will be penetrated with the grandeur of all things, with the slowness with which vegetation develops, with the rapidity with which thought travels; and, when you look at your smiling flowers, you will return into yourself. Then, when you walk with your husband before you and your children behind, the one screaming, murmuring, playing, the other mute and satisfied, I know in advance what you will write to me. Your valley which intoxicates and its hills, arid or shaded with handsome trees, your so curious Provençal meadow, its clear waters divided into streamlets, the different tints of the light,—all this infinitude, varied by God and surrounding you, will recall to you the infinite monotony of your own heart. But at least I shall be there, my Renée, and you will find a friend whose heart will never be affected by the least social pettiness, a heart all your own.

Monday.

My dear, my Spaniard is of an admirable melancholy,—there is in him an unspeakable calmness, austerity, worthiness, earnestness which interest

me to the last degree. This constant solemnity and the silence which covers this man have in them something provocative for the soul. He is mute and superb like a fallen king. We occupy ourselves greatly with him, Griffith and I, as with an enigma. What an absurdity! a teacher of languages has the triumph of attracting more of my attention than any other man has done, I who have now passed in review all the sons of noble families, all the attachés of embassy and the ambassadors, the generals and the sub-lieutenants, the peers of France, their sons and their nephews, the Court and the city. The coldness of this man is irritating. The most profound pride fills the desert which he endeavors to put and does put between us; in short, he envelops himself in obscurity. It is he who has the coquetry and it is I who have the enterprise. This strangeness amuses me all the more that all this is without consequence. What is a man, a Spaniard and a teacher of languages? I do not feel within me the least respect for any man whatever, were he a king. I find that we are worth more than all the men, even the most justly illustrious. Oh! how I would have dominated Napoléon! how I would have made him feel, if he had loved me, that he was at my mercy!

Yesterday I launched an epigram which must have touched Master Hénarez to the quick; he made no reply, he had finished his lesson, he took his hat and saluted, giving me a look which made me think that he will never return. This seems to me a

great deal,—there would be something sinister in recommencing the *Nouvelle Héloïse* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which I have just read and which causes me to hate all love. Discussing and phrasing love seems to me insupportable. Clarissa is also too much contented when she has written her long little letter; but Richardson's book explains moreover, admirably, my father tells me, the English character. That of Rousseau has upon me the effect of an epistolary philosophical sermon.

Love is, I believe, a poem entirely personal. There is nothing that is not at once both false and true in all that the authors write for us about it. Verily, my pretty dear, as you can only tell me of conjugal love, I think, in the well understood interests of our double existence, it is necessary that I should remain single, and that I should have some fine passion, so that we may get to know life well. Relate to me very exactly everything that happens to you, especially in the first days, with that animal which I call a husband. I promise you the same exactitude, if ever I am loved. Adieu, poor swallowed-up dear.

XI

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU

La Crampade.

Your Spaniard and you, you make me shudder, my dear mignonne. I write you these few lines to

entreat you to send him away. Everything that you say to me of him relates to the most dangerous character of those of this class who, not having anything to lose, risk everything. This man should not be your lover and cannot be your husband. I will write you more in detail on the secret events of my marriage, but when I shall no longer have at heart the uneasiness which your last letter has occasioned me.

XII

MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE

February.

My beautiful lamb, this morning at nine o'clock, my father was announced in my apartment: I was up and dressed. I found him seated gravely at the chimney-corner, in my salon, thoughtful beyond his usual custom; he indicated to me the sofa opposite to him, I understood him, and took my place on it with a gravity which mimicked his own so well that he commenced to smile, but a smile tinged with a grave sadness.

"You are at least as clever as your grandmother," he said to me.

"Come, *mon père,* do not play the courtier here," I replied to him; "you have something to ask me!"

He rose in great agitation, and talked to me for half an hour. This conversation, my dear, deserves to be preserved. As soon as he had gone, I

placed myself at my table endeavoring to set down his words. This is the first time that I had known my father to express himself fully. He commenced by flattering me, in which he was not altogether ill-advised; I should at least be grateful to him for having divined me and appreciated me.

"Armande," he said to me, "you have curiously deceived me and agreeably surprised me. When you arrived from the convent, I took you for a young girl like all the other young girls, without much judgment, ignorant, who can be bought off cheaply with gewgaws, finery, and who reflect but little."

"Thank you, *mon père,* for the young girls."

"Oh! it is no longer a question of young girls!" said he, with the involuntary gesture of a man of public affairs. "You have a mind of an incredible breadth, you judge everything by its intrinsic worth, your acuteness is extreme; you are very malicious, —you are believed to have seen nothing when in fact you have your eyes on the cause of the effects which others are examining. You are a minister in petticoats; there is no one but you who could understand me here, there is then only yourself to employ against you if it were wished to obtain some sacrifice from you. Therefore I have come to explain myself frankly concerning the designs which I have formed and in which I persist. In order to cause you to adopt them I must demonstrate to you that they require elevated sentiments. I am therefore obliged to enter into political considerations of the highest interest for the kingdom, and which

might weary any other person than you. After having heard me, you will have a long time for reflection; I will give you six months if necessary. You are your own absolute mistress; and, if you refuse the sacrifices which I ask of you, I will submit to your refusal without tormenting you any more."

At this exordium, my lamb, I became really serious, and I said to him:

"Speak, *mon père.*"

Well, here is what the statesman pronounced:

"My child, France is in a precarious situation which is known only to the king and some lofty minds; but the king is a head without arms; and the great minds which are in the secret of the danger have no authority over the men to be employed in order to arrive at happy results. These men, vomited up by the popular elections, are not willing to serve as instruments. However remarkable they may be, they continue the work of social destruction, instead of aiding us to re-establish the edifice. In two words, there are now only two parties,—that of Marius and that of Sylla; I am for Sylla against Marius. This is our situation broadly. As to details, the Revolution continues, it is implanted in the law, it is written on the soil, it is always in men's minds: it is so much the more formidable that it appears to be vanquished to the greater number of those counselors of the throne who see in it neither soldiers nor treasures. The king has a great mind, he sees clearly here; but, from day to

day more and more under the influence of his brother's followers, who wish to go too fast, he has not two years to live, and this dying man arranges his draperies to die peacefully. Do you know, my child, what are the most destructive effects of the Revolution? You would never suspect them. In cutting off the head of Louis XVI., the Revolution has struck off all the heads of fathers of families. There is no longer any family to-day, there is no longer anything but individuals. In wishing to become a nation, the French have renounced being an Empire. In proclaiming the equality of rights to the paternal inheritance, they have killed the family spirit, they have created the exchequer. But they have provided for the feebleness of superiorities and the blind force of the masses, for the extinction of the arts, the reign of personal interest and opened the pathways to conquest. We are between two systems: either to constitute the State by the family, or to constitute it by personal interest,—democracy or aristocracy, discussion or obedience, catholicism or religious indifference, that is the question in a few words. I am of the small number of those who wish to resist that which is called the people, in their own interest be it understood. It is no longer a question of feudal rights, as the fools are told, and of gentility; it is a question of the State, it is a question of the life of France. Every country which does not establish its base on paternal power is without an assured existence. There commences the ladder of

responsibilities, and the subordination, which ascends even to the king. The king, he is all of us! To die for the king, that is to die for one's self, for one's family, which does not die any more surely than does the kingdom. Each animal has its own instinct; that of man is the family spirit. A nation is strong when it is composed of rich families, all the members of which are interested in the defence of the common treasure,—treasure of money, of glory, of privileges, of enjoyments; it is weak when it is composed of individuals not bound together, to whom it matters but little whether they obey seven men or one only, a Russian or a Corsican, provided that each individual keeps his own field; and this unhappy egotist does not see that some day this field will be taken from him. We are on the way to a horrible state of affairs, in case of failure. There will no longer be any but penal or fiscal laws, the purse or the life. The most generous country on the earth will no longer be conducted by sentiments. They should have been developed there, nursed for incurable wounds. In the first place, there will be a universal jealousy: the superior classes will be hopelessly confounded, the equality of wishes will be taken for the equality of capacity; the real superiorities recognized, authenticated, will be invaded by the masses of the bourgeoisie. A man can be chosen among a thousand; nothing can be found among three millions of similar ambitions, clothed with the same livery, that of mediocrity. This triumphant mass will not perceive that it will

have against it a terrible mass, that of the peasant owners,—twenty millions of acres of land, living, marching, reasoning, understanding nothing, always wishing more, barricading everything, disposing of brutal strength—"

"But," said I interrupting my father, "what can I do for the State? I do not feel the slightest disposition to become the family Joan of Arc and to perish at the stake of a convent."

"You are a little plague," said my father to me. "If I speak seriously to you, you answer me by jests; when I jest, you speak to me as if you were ambassador."

"Love lives by contrasts," I said to him.

And he laughed till the tears came in his eyes.

"You will think about what I have explained to you; you will remark how much there is of confidence and of grandeur in speaking to you as I have just done, and perhaps events will help my projects. I know that, as to yourself, these projects will be injurious, iniquitous; therefore I ask their approval less of your heart and of your imagination than of your reason, I have recognized more reason and good sense in you than I have seen in any one else whomsoever—"

"You flatter yourself," I said to him smiling, "for I am indeed your daughter!"

"In short," he resumed, "I could not be inconsistent. Who wishes the end wishes the means, and we owe the example to all. Therefore, you are not entitled to a fortune so long as that of your younger

brother is not assured, and I wish to employ your entire capital in constituting a majorat for him."

"But," I replied, "you do not forbid me to live as I please and to be happy when I pass over my fortune to you?"

"Ah! provided," he answered, "that life as you understand it should reflect in no way upon the honor, the consideration and, I may add, the glory of your family."

"Come," I cried, "you strip me very promptly of my superior reason."

"We will not find in France," he said with bitterness, "a man who would wish for wife a young girl of the highest nobility without dot and who would acknowledge her to be herself a sufficient fortune. If this husband should be encountered, he will belong to the class of parvenu bourgeois: I am, in this respect, of the eleventh century."

"And I also," I said to him. "But why do you make me despair? are there not some old peers of France?"

"You are well advanced, Louise," he cried.

Then he left me smiling after having kissed my hand.

I received your letter this very morning, and it caused me to think precisely of that abyss in which you assume that I might fall. It seemed that a voice cried to me within myself: "You will fall in!" I have, therefore, taken my precaution. Hénarez dares to look at me, my dear, and his eyes trouble me, they produce upon me a sensation which

I can only compare to that of profound terror. This man should no more be looked at than should a toad; he is ugly and fascinating. Here are now two days that I have been deliberating with myself whether I should say plainly to my father that I did not wish to take any more lessons, and cause this Hénarez to be dismissed; but, after my virile resolutions, I felt within me the need of being moved by the horrible sensations which I experienced on seeing this man, and I said: "Just once more, and then I will speak." My dear, his voice is of a penetrating sweetness, he speaks as La Fodor sings. His manners are simple and without the least affectation. And what beautiful teeth! Just now, on leaving me, he seemed to notice how much he interested me, and he made the motion, very respectfully moreover, of taking my hand to kiss it; but he repressed it, as if frightened at his boldness and the distance which he was about to overleap. Notwithstanding the little of this that he showed, I guessed it; I smiled, for nothing is more provocative of tenderness than to see the impulse of an inferior nature which is thrown back upon itself. There is so much audacity in the love of a bourgeois for a noble young girl! My smile encouraged him, the poor man looked for his hat without seeing it, he was not able to find it, and I brought it to him gravely. His eyes were moistened by restrained tears. There was a world of things and of thoughts in that so brief moment. We comprehended each other so well that at that moment I offered him my hand to

kiss. Perhaps this was to say to him that love could fill up the space which separated us. Well, I do not know what it was that moved me,—Griffith had turned her back, I offered to him proudly my white hand, and I felt the fire of his lips tempered by two big tears. Ah! my angel, I remained without strength in my armchair, thoughtful; I was happy, and it was impossible for me to explain how or why. That which I felt, it is poesy. My abasement, at which I am ashamed at this hour, seemed to me a grandeur: it fascinated me, that is my excuse.

Friday.

This man is really very fine. His words are elegant, his mind is of a remarkable superiority. My dear, he is as strong and logical as Bossuet while explaining to me the mechanism not only of the Spanish language, but also of human thought and of all languages. French seems to be his maternal tongue. When I expressed to him my surprise at this he replied that he had been in France when very young with the King of Spain, at Valençay. What has happened in this soul? He is no longer the same: he came simply dressed, but absolutely like a grand seigneur who had come out for a morning walk. His mind was as brilliant as a beacon during this lesson: he displayed all his eloquence. Like a weary man who had regained his strength, he revealed to me the whole of a soul that had been carefully hidden. He related to me the story of a

poor devil of a valet who killed himself for one look of a queen of Spain.

"He could only die!" I said to him.

This reply brought joy to his heart, and his look veritably terrified me.

That evening I went to a ball at the house of the Duchesse de Lenoncourt; the Prince de Talleyrand was there. I asked him, through Monsieur de Vandenesse, a charming young man, if he had among his guests in 1809, at his estate, a Hénarez.

"Hénarez is the Moorish name of the De Soria family, who are, it is said, Abencerrages converted to Christianity. The old duke and his two sons accompanied the king. The eldest, the Duc de Soria of to-day, has been deprived of all his property, honors and grandeurs by the King Ferdinand, who avenges an old enmity. The duke committed an immense fault in accepting the constitutional ministry with Valdez. Happily, he escaped from Cadiz before the entry of Monseigneur, the Duc d'Angoulême, who, despite his good will did not succeed in saving him from the anger of the king."

This reply, which the Vicomte de Vandenesse brought me textually, gave me a great deal to think of. I cannot say in what anxiety I passed the time till my first lesson, which took place this morning. During the first quarter of an hour of the lesson, I asked myself, while studying him, if he were duke or bourgeois, without being able to arrive at any conclusion. He seemed to divine my thoughts as they rose in me and to please himself by baffling

them. Finally I could no longer restrain myself, I left my book abruptly, and, interrupting the translation which I was making aloud, I said to him in Spanish:

"You are deceiving us, monsieur. You are not a poor bourgeois liberal, you are the Duc de Soria!"

"Mademoiselle," he replied with a sorrowful movement, "unfortunately, I am not the Duc de Soria."

I comprehended all the despair that he put in the word *unfortunately*. Ah! my dear, it would be, certainly, impossible to put so much and as much passion in a single word. He had lowered his eyes and no longer dared to look at me.

"Monsieur de Talleyrand," I said to him, "with whom you passed the years of exile, leaves no other alternative to a Hénarez but to be either the Duc de Soria in disgrace or a servant."

He lifted his eyes to me and showed me two brasiers black and brilliant, two eyes at once flaming and humiliated. This man appeared to me to be at this moment in torture.

"My father," he said, "was in fact a servant of the King of Spain."

Griffith was not acquainted with this method of study. We made disquieting pauses at each question and at each answer.

"In fact," I said to him, "are you noble or bourgeois?"

"You know, mademoiselle, that in Spain everybody, even the beggar, is noble."

This reserve made me impatient. I had prepared since the last lesson one of those amusements which please the imagination. I had traced in a letter the ideal portrait of the man by whom I should wish to be loved, proposing to myself to give it to him to translate. Up to this time, I had translated from Spanish into French, and not from French into Spanish; I made this observation to him, and asked Griffith to get for me the last letter which I had received from one of my girl friends.

"I will see," I thought, "by the effect which my programme has on him, what blood is in his veins."

I took the paper from the hands of Griffith saying: "See if I have made a good copy."

For it was all in my handwriting. I offered the paper, in which lay if you wish the trap, and I examined him while he read this:

"The man who will please me, my dear, will be rude and haughty with men, but gentle with women. His eagle glance will repress instantly anything which can resemble ridicule. He will have a smile of pity for those who wish to turn into jest sacred things, those above all which constitute the poetry of the heart, and without which life would be nothing more than a sorrowful reality. I despise profoundly those who would wish to deprive us of the source of religious ideas, so fertile in consolation. Thus, his beliefs should have the simplicity of those of a child united to the unshakable conviction of a

man of intellect who has thoroughly examined his reasons for belief. His wit new, original, shall be without affectation or parade; he can say nothing which shall be unnecessary or out of place; it will be as impossible for him to weary others as to weary himself; for he will have in his soul a fund of richness. All his thoughts should be of a noble character, elevated, chivalrous, with no trace of egotism. In all his actions, there shall be remarked the total absence of calculation or of interest. His defects shall arise from the very extent of his ideas, which shall be above his time. In everything, I should expect to find him in advance of his epoch. Full of delicate attentions for all feeble things, he shall be considerate for all women, but only with great difficulty seriously attracted by any one;—he will consider this as much too serious to be made a sport of. It may thus happen that he will pass his life without truly loving, whilst displaying in himself all the qualities which can inspire a profound passion. But, if he once finds his ideal woman, that one seen in glimpses of waking dreams; if he encounters a being who comprehends him, who fills his soul and sheds on all his life a ray of happiness, who shines for him as a star through the clouds of this world so sombre, so cold, so icy; who gives an entirely new charm to his existence, and causes to vibrate in him the hitherto silent chords,—it is useless to say that he will recognize and appreciate his happiness. Also will he render her perfectly happy. Never, neither by a word or by a look, will he hurt that

loving heart which will be placed in his hands with the blind love of an infant who sleeps in the arms of its mother; for, if she awaken from this sweet dream, her heart and her soul will be forever rent; it will be impossible for her to embark on this ocean without committing to it all her future.

"This man will have necessarily the physiognomy, the appearance, the walk, in short the manner of doing the greatest as well as the smallest things of superior beings, who are simple and without previous preparation. He may be ugly, but his hands shall be handsome; he will have the upper lip slightly curled by an ironical and disdainful smile for the indifferent; and he will reserve for those whom he loves the celestial and brilliant ray of his look which reveals his soul."

"Mademoiselle," he said to me in Spanish and in a voice deeply moved, "will she permit me to keep this in memory of her? This is the last lesson which I shall have the honor to give her, and that which I receive in this writing may become an eternal rule of conduct. I left Spain a fugitive and penniless; but to-day I have received from my family a sum which suffices for my needs. I shall have the honor to send you some poor Spaniard to replace me."

He seemed thus to say to me: "There is enough of this play." He rose by a movement of incredible dignity and left me confounded by this delicacy unknown among the men of his class. He

LOUISE AND THE BARON DE MACUMER

He seemed thus to say to me: "There is enough of this play." He rose by a movement of incredible dignity and left me confounded by this delicacy unknown among the men of his class. He descended and asked to see my father. At dinner, my father said to me smiling:

"Louise, you have received lessons in Spanish from an ex-minister of the king of Spain and a man condemned to death."

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descended and asked to see my father. At dinner, my father said to me smiling:

"Louise, you have received lessons in Spanish from an ex-minister of the King of Spain and a man condemned to death."

"The Duc de Soria," I said to him.

"The duke!" replied my father. "He is so no longer, he now takes the title of Baron de Macumer, from a fief which remains to him in Sardinia. He seems to me sufficiently original."

"Do not dishonor with this word which, with you, always carries a tinge of mockery and disdain, a man who is worthy of you," I said to him, "and who, I believe, has a noble soul."

"Baroness de Macumer?" cried my father looking at me with a mocking air.

I lowered my eyes with a movement of pride.

"But," said my mother, "Hénarez must have encountered on the doorstep the Spanish ambassador?"

"Yes," replied my father. "The ambassador asked me if I were conspiring against the king, his master; but he saluted the ex-grandee of Spain with much deference, placing himself at his orders."

This, my dear Madame de l'Estorade, happened two weeks ago, and it is now two weeks since I have seen this man who loves me, for this man loves me. What is he doing? I would like to be a fly, a mouse, a sparrow. I should like to see him alone, at home, without his perceiving me. We have a man to whom I can say: "Go and die for

me!—" And he is of a character to do it, I believe so at least. Finally, there is in Paris a man of whom I think, whose look and whose glance fill me inwardly with light. Oh! it is an enemy whom I should tread under foot. What, there should be a man without whom I could not live, who should be necessary to me! You are married and I am in love! At the end of four months, these two pigeons who flew so high have fallen into the mire of reality.

Sunday.

Yesterday, at the Italiens, I felt myself looked at, my eyes were attracted as if by magic by two eyes of fire which burned like two carbuncles in an obscure corner of the orchestra. Hénarez did not take his eyes off me. The monster had sought the only place from which he could see me, and there he was. I do not know what he is in politics, but he has a genius for love.

"Such, beautiful Renée, is the point where we are,"

as the grand Corneille says

XIII

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU

La Crampade, February.

My dear Louise, before writing to you I have been obliged to wait; but now I know so many things,

or, rather, I have learned them, and I should reveal them to you for your future happiness. There is so much difference between a young girl and a married woman, that the young girl can no more conceive it than the married woman could become again a young girl. I prefer being married to Louis de l'Estorade to returning to the convent. This is clear. After having understood that, if I did not marry Louis I would return to the convent, I was obliged, in the words of the young girl, to resign myself. Resigned, I set myself to examining my situation in order to make the best possible use of it.

In the first place, the gravity of the engagement filled me with terror. Marriage proposes to itself a life, whilst love only proposes to itself pleasure; but marriage continues when the pleasures disappear, and gives birth to interests much more dear than those of the man and the woman who unite themselves. Thus perhaps it is not necessary, in order to have a happy marriage, to have more than that friendship which, because of its gentleness, resigns itself to many human imperfections. Nothing opposed my having a friendship for Louis de l'Estorade. Fully decided not to seek in marriage the enjoyments of that love of which we thought so often and with a so dangerous exaltation, I felt the gentlest tranquillity within me. "If I have not love, why not seek for happiness?" I said to myself. "Moreover, I am loved, and I will let myself be loved. My marriage will not be a servitude, but

a perpetual commandment. What inconvenience will this state of affairs offer to a woman who wishes to remain absolute mistress of herself?"

This point, so important, of having marriage without the husband was arranged in a conversation between Louis and myself, in which he revealed to me the excellence of his character and the gentleness of his soul. My mignonne, I wish greatly to remain in this beautiful season of amorous hope which, not giving birth to pleasure, leaves to the soul its virginity. To yield nothing to duty, to the law, to depend only on one's self and to preserve one's freedom of will—what a sweet and noble thing! This contract, opposed to that of the laws and of the sacrament itself, could only be drawn up between Louis and myself. This difficulty, the first one seen, is the only one which followed the conclusion of my marriage. If, from the beginning, I had resolved to do anything rather than to return to the convent, it is in our natures to demand the most after having obtained the least; and we are, dear angel, of those who want all. I examined my Louis out of the corner of my eye, and I said to myself: "Has misfortune made him good or bad?" By dint of studying him, I ended by discovering that his love amounted to a passion. Once arrived at the state of an idol, in seeing him pale and tremble at the least look of coolness, I comprehended that I could dare anything. I naturally led him away from his parents, in walks in which I prudently interrogated his heart. I made him talk, I

demanded of him an account of his ideas, of his plans, of our future. My questions revealed so much preconceived reflection and attacked so precisely the weakest spots of this horrible double life, that Louis has since avowed to me that he was terrified at a so sapient virginity. For myself, I listened to his answers; he twisted himself up in them like those from whom fear takes away all their methods; I finished by seeing that chance had given me an adversary who was so much the more inferior to me that he divined instinctively that which you named so proudly my great soul. Broken by misfortunes and by distress, he regarded himself as almost destroyed, and lost himself in three horrible fears. In the first place, he is thirty-seven and I am only seventeen; it is not without fear then that he measures the twenty years which separate our ages. Then, he is convinced that I am very beautiful; and Louis, who shares our opinions on this subject, does not see without deep sorrow how much of his youth has been lost through his sufferings. Finally, he feels that I as a woman, am much superior to him as a man. Reduced to distrust of himself by these three visible inferiorities, he fears that he cannot make me happy, and sees himself taken only as a last resource. Were it not for the convent in the distance, I would not marry him, he said to me one evening timidly.

"That is true," I replied gravely.

My dear friend, he caused me the first of those great emotions which men occasion us. I was

touched to the heart by the two great tears which welled up in his eyes

"Louis," I said in a consoling voice, "it rests entirely with you to make of this marriage of convenience a marriage to which I can give my entire consent. That which I am going to ask of you requires on your part a much nobler abnegation than the pretended servitude of your love when it is sincere. Can you elevate yourself to the level of friendship as I understand it? One has only one friend during life, and I wish to be yours. Friendship is the bond of two similar souls, united by their strength and yet independent. Let us be friends and associates to support life together. Leave me my entire independence. I do not forbid your inspiring me with that love for you which you say you have for me; but I wish to be your wife only willingly. Give me the desire to abandon to you my free will, and I will sacrifice it to you immediately. Thus, I do not forbid your importing passion into this friendship, or troubling it by the voice of love: I will endeavor for my part to make our affection perfect. Above all, spare me the unpleasantnesses which the sufficiently awkward situations in which we will then find ourselves may give me before others. I do not wish to appear either capricious or prudish, because I am not so in the least, and I think you a sufficiently honest man to offer to you to preserve the outward appearances of marriage."

My dear, I have never seen a man so happy as

was Louis at my proposition; his eyes sparkled, the fire of happiness in them dried his tears.

"Do not think," I said to him in conclusion, "that there is anything extravagant in that which I ask of you. This condition arises from my very great desire to have your esteem. If you had acquired me only through marriage, would you be more grateful to me some day to see your love crowned by the legal or religious formalities and not by myself? If, while you still did not please me, but while obeying you passively, as my very honored mother had just recommended me to do, I should have a child, do you think that I would love that child as much as one who would be the son of a mutual desire? If it be not indispensable to please each other as much as the lovers do, admit, monsieur, that it is necessary not to displease each other. Well, we are about to be placed in a dangerous situation,—we are going to live in the country, is it not necessary to reflect on all the instabilities of passion? Can not the wise take measures in advance against the misfortunes of change?"

He was strangely suprised to find me so reasonable and so reasoning; but he made me a solemn promise, on which I took his hand and grasped it affectionately.

We were married at the end of the week. Certain of preserving my liberty, I put a good deal of gaiety into all the insipid details of the ceremony, —I could be myself, and perhaps I was set down for

a very lively gossip, to use the phrase of Blois. They had secured for the position of mistress of the household a young girl charmed with the situation, so novel and full of resources, in which I had been able to establish myself. My dear, I had perceived, as in a vision, all the difficulties of my life, and I sincerely desired to make the happiness of this man. Now, in the solitude in which we live, if a wife does not command, the marriage becomes insupportable in a very little time. A wife should therefore have the charms of a mistress and the qualities of a spouse. To mingle some uncertainty with pleasure,—is it not to prolong the illusion and to perpetuate the enjoyments of self-love to which all creatures cling so close and with so much reason? Conjugal love, as I conceive it, invests a wife with hope, renders her sovereign and gives her an inexhaustible force, a warmth of life which makes everything flourish around her. The more she is mistress of herself, the more certain is she to render happiness and love vital qualities. But I have above all exacted that the most profound mystery should cover our interior arrangements. The man who is ruled by his wife is justly an object of ridicule. The influence of a woman should be entirely secret: with us, in everything, it is grace, that is mystery. If I undertake to lift up this disheartened character, to restore to their native lustre qualities of which I have caught glimpses, I wish that everything should seem spontaneous in Louis. Such is the sufficiently fine task which I have given myself

and which is enough for the glory of a woman. I am almost proud of having a secret to make my life interesting, a plan to which I shall bring all my efforts, and which will be known only to you and to God.

At present I am almost happy, and perhaps would be entirely so if I could communicate it to a beloved soul,—but the idea of saying it to him, to him? My happiness would hurt him, it has been necessary to hide it from him. He has, my dear, the delicacy of a woman, like all men who have suffered much. During three months we remained as we were before marriage. I studied, as you may well think, a multitude of little personal questions, of much more importance to love than is generally believed. Notwithstanding my coldness, this emboldened soul unfolded itself,—I have seen this countenance change expression and rejuvenate itself. The elegance which I introduced in the household has thrown its reflection upon his person. I have become accustomed to him insensibly, I have made of him another myself. Through constantly seeing him, I have discovered the correspondence between his soul and his physiognomy. The beast which we call a husband, according to your expression, has disappeared. I have seen, on an evening I know not how sweet, a lover whose words went to my soul, and on whose arm I leaned with an indescribable pleasure. Finally, to be truthful with you, as I shall be with God, whom one cannot deceive, piqued perhaps by the admirable fidelity

with which he kept his oath, curiosity awakened in my heart. Very much ashamed of myself, I resisted. Alas! when one no longer resists but through dignity, an agreement is soon arrived at. The fête has then been secret as between two lovers, and secret it shall remain between us. When you get married, you will approve of my discretion. You may know, however, that nothing was wanting of that which the most delicate love might wish, nor of that something unforeseen which is, in some sort, the honor of that moment,—the mysterious graces which our imaginations ask of it, the impulse which excuses, the consent obtained, the ideal delights of which we have long had glimpses and which subjugate our souls before we allow ourselves to come to the reality, all the seductions were there in enchanting forms.

I avow to you that, notwithstanding all these fine things, I have anew stipulated for my freedom of will, and I do not wish to tell you all the reasons. You will certainly be the only soul in whom I will confide this demi-confidence. Even in belonging to one's husband, adored or not, I believe that we should lose a great deal in not hiding our sentiments and the judgment which we form of marriage. The only joy which I have had, and which has been heavenly, comes from the certainty of having restored life to this poor being before giving it to children. Louis has resumed his youth, his strength, his gaiety. He is no longer the same man. I have, like a fairy, effaced even the memory

of his sorrows. I have metamorphosed Louis, he has become charming. Sure of pleasing me, he displays his mind and reveals new qualities. To be the constant principle of the happiness of a man, when that man is conscious of it and mingles gratitude with love, ah! dear, this certainly develops in the soul a strength which surpasses that of the most complete love. This impetuous and durable force, one and varied, gives birth finally to the family, that beautiful work of women, and which I now comprehend in all its fertile beauty. The old father is no longer avaricious. He gives blindly whatever I wish for. The domestics are joyful; it seems as though the happiness of Louis had radiated in this interior, where I reign through love. The old man has adapted himself to all my ameliorations, he has wished not to offer any contrast to my luxury; he has assumed, to please me, the costume and, with the costume, the manners of the present day. We have English horses, a coupé, a calèche and a tilbury. Our servants have a simple but not inelegant livery. Thus we pass for prodigals. I employ my intelligence—I am not laughing—to maintain my household with economy, to give in it the utmost pleasure for the least possible sum. I have already demonstrated to Louis the necessity of constructing roads, in order to acquire the reputation of a man occupied with the welfare of his country. I oblige him to complete his instruction. I hope to see him soon member of the Council General of his department through the influence of my family and that of

his mother. I have declared to him flatly that I was ambitious, that I did not take it ill that his father continued to look after our property, to accumulate savings, because I wished him to be devoted to politics; if we should have children, I should wish to see them all happy and occupying good situations in the State; under penalty of losing my esteem and my affection, he must become a deputy of the department at the coming elections; my family will aid his candidacy, and we shall then have the pleasure of passing all the winters at Paris. Ah! my angel, by the ardor with which he has obeyed me, I have been able to see how much I was loved. Finally, yesterday, he wrote me this letter from Marseilles, where he had gone for a few hours.

"When you gave me permission to love you, my gentle Renée, I believed in happiness; but, to-day, I no longer see any end to it. The past is no longer anything but a vague memory, a shadow necessary to give value to the splendor of my felicity. When I am at your side, I am transported by love to such an extent that I am incapable of expressing to you the extent of my affection,—I can only admire you, adore you. Speech only comes to me when I am away from you. You are perfectly beautiful, and of a beauty so grave, so majestic, that time will change it with difficulty; and, although love between husband and wife is not connected so much with beauty as with the feelings, which are excellent in you, let me say to you that this certainty of

seeing you always beautiful gives me a joy which is increased at every look I give you. The harmony and the dignity of the lines of your face, in which your sublime soul is revealed, have an inexpressible purity under the vigorous color of the skin. The light of your black eyes and the bold line of your forehead reveal to us how much your virtues are elevated, how valuable is your intercourse and how your heart would be superior to the storms of life, if any should arise. Nobility is your distinctive character; I do not pretend to comprehend you; but I write this to you that you may know that I am aware of all the value of the treasure which I possess. The little which you will grant me will be always happiness for me, for a long time to come as at present; for I feel all that is grand in our promise to retain on both sides, all our liberty. We shall never be indebted to anything but our free will for any testimony of tenderness. We shall be free notwithstanding the close chains. I shall be so much the more proud to win you again thus that I now know the prize which you attach to this conquest. You will never be able to speak or to breathe, to act or to think, without my forever admiring, all the more, the grace of your body and that of your soul. There is in you something divine, sensible, and enchanting, which I cannot express, that brings into accord reflection, honor, pleasure and hope, which gives, in short, to love a more spacious extent than that of life. Oh, my angel, may the genius of love remain faithful to me

and the future be full of that delight by the aid of which you have embellished everything around me! When will you be a mother, that I may see you commended by the vigor of your life, that I may hear you, with that voice so smooth and with those thoughts so fine, so new, and so curiously well rendered, bless that love which has refreshed my soul, retempered my faculties, which constitutes my pride, and from which I have drawn, as from a magic fountain, a new life? Yes, I will be all that you wish that I should be: I will become one of the men useful to my country, and I will reflect upon you that glory the guiding principle of which will be your satisfaction."

My dear, you may see how I form him. This style is of recent date; in a year, it will be better. Louis is in the first transports, I am expecting for him that equal and continuous sensation of happiness which a happy marriage should give when, sure of a perfect mutual knowledge, a man and a woman have found the secret of varying the infinite, of lending enchantment to the very basis of life. This fine secret of true spouses, I have glimpses of and wish to possess. You see that he thinks himself loved, the stupid, as if he were not my husband. I am as yet, however, only at that material attachment which gives us the strength to support many things. However, Louis is amiable, there is a grand equality in his character, he does quite simply those things for which the greater number

of men praise themselves. In fact, if I do not love him, I feel myself very capable of cherishing him.

Here then are my black hairs, my black eyes the lashes of which unfold themselves, according to you, like jalousies, my imperial air and my person elevated to the rank of sovereign power. We will see in ten years from now, my dear, if we are not both of us very gay, very happy in that Paris, from which I shall bring you back sometimes into my beautiful oasis of Provence. Oh, Louise, do not compromise our beautiful future for both of us! Do not commit the follies with which you menace me. I have married an old young man, do you marry some young old man of the Chamber of Peers. You will be there in the right.

XIV

THE DUC DE SORIA TO THE BARON DE MACUMER

Madrid.

My dear brother, you have not made me Duc de Soria for me not to act as Duc de Soria. If I knew you were wandering and without the comforts which fortune gives everywhere, you would render my happiness insupportable. Neither Marie nor I, we will not marry until we have learned that you have accepted the sum sent to you by Urraca. These two millions come from your own savings and from those of Marie. We have prayed both of us kneeling before the same altar, and with what fervor! ah! God knows! for your happiness. Oh! my

brother! our wishes should be granted. The love which you seek and which should be the consolation of your exile, it will descend from Heaven. Marie read your letter weeping, and all her admiration is for you. As for myself, I have accepted for my house and not for myself. The king has fulfilled your expectation. Ah! you have so disdainfully thrown to him his pleasure, as their prey is thrown to tigers, that, to avenge you, I would like to make him feel how you have crushed him by your grandeur. The only thing which I have taken for myself, dear beloved brother, is my happiness, it is Marie. Thus shall I always be before you as a creature before the Creator. There will be in my life and in that of Marie a day as beautiful as that of our happy marriage, this will be that one on which we shall know that your heart is comprehended, that a woman loves you as you should be and wished to be loved. Do not forget that, if you live for us, we live also for you. You can write to us in all confidence under cover of the Papal Nuncio, sending your letters by way of Rome. The ambassador of France at Rome will doubtless take charge of conveying them to the Secretary of State, to Monseigneur Bemboni, whom our legate has had care to notify. Any other conveyance would be unsafe. Adieu, dear dispossessed one, dear exile. Be proud at least of the happiness which you have given us if you can be proud of it. God will without doubt listen to our prayers full of you.

FERNAND.

XV

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE

March.

Ah, my angel, marriage makes one philosophical!—Your dear face should have been yellow then when you were writing me those terrible thoughts on human life and on our duties. Do you believe then that you will convert me to marriage by this programme of subterranean labors? Alas! do you see then the state to which you have been brought by our too knowing reveries? We came out of Blois adorned with all our innocence and armed with the sharp points of reflection: the darts of this purely moral experience of things have turned against you! If I did not know you for the purest and most angelic creature in the world, I would say to you that your calculations suggested depravation. Why, my dear, in the interest of your country life, you put your pleasure in regular order, you treat love as you treat your woods! Oh! I had rather perish in the violence of the whirlwinds of my heart than live in the dryness of your wise arithmetic. You were, like me, the best instructed young girl, because we had reflected a great deal on a very few things; but, my child, philosophy without love, or under a false love, is the most horrible of the conjugal hypocrisies. I do not know it, from time to time, the greatest imbecile on the earth would not perceive the owl of wisdom squatting in your

heap of roses, a discovery but very slightly diverting, which may put to flight the best kindled passion. You make your own destiny, instead of being its plaything. We are both of us developing very singularly,—much philosophy and little love, this is your regimen; much love and little philosophy, this is mine. The Julie of Jean-Jacques, whom I thought a professor, is only a student compared with you. Feminine virtue! have you measured life! Alas! I am making fun of you, perhaps you are right. You have immolated your youth in a day, and you have made yourself miserly before the time. Your Louis will undoubtedly be happy. If he loves you, and I do not doubt it, he will never perceive that you are conducting yourself in the interest of your family just as the courtesans conduct themselves in the interest of their fortune; and certainly they render men happy, if we may judge by the crazy dissipations of which they are the object. A clear-seeing husband would remain, without doubt, passionately attached to you; but would he not end by dispensing for himself with all gratitude for a wife who makes of falsehood a sort of moral corset as necessary to her life as the other is to her body? But, dear, love is in my eyes the principle of all the virtues ascribed to an image of the Divinity! Love, like all the principles, does not calculate, and is the infinite in our souls. Have you not wished to justify to yourself the frightful position of a young girl married to a man whom she can only esteem?

Duty, that is your rule and your measure; but to act through necessity, is not that the morality of a society of Atheists? To act through love and through feeling, is not that the secret law of women? You have made a man of yourself, and your Louis will find himself the woman! Oh! dear, your letter has plunged me into infinite meditations. I have perceived that the convent will never take the place of a mother for young girls. I entreat you, my noble angel with black eyes, so pure and so proud, so grave and so elegant, think on these first cries which your letter has drawn from me! I have consoled myself by reflecting that, at the moment in which I am lamenting, love has doubtless overthrown the scaffoldings of reason. I should perhaps do worse without reasoning, without calculating: passion is an element which should have a logic as cruel as yours.

Monday.

Yesterday evening, when retiring, I placed myself at my window to contemplate the sky, which was of a sublime purity. The stars resembled silver nails which held up a blue veil. In the silence of the night, I could hear a breathing, and by the faint light of the stars I saw my Spaniard, perched like a squirrel in the branches of one of the trees of the side alley of the boulevards, admiring doubtless my windows. This discovery had for its first effect to send me back into my chamber, with a feeling as though my hands and feet were broken; but, at

the bottom of this sensation of fear, I felt a delicious joy. I was crushed and happy. Not one of these brilliant Frenchmen who wish to marry me has had the spirit to come and pass his nights in an elm, at the risk of being arrested by the guard. My Spaniard had doubtless been there some time. Ah! he no longer gives me lessons, he wishes to receive them, he shall have them. If he knew all that I had said to myself about his apparent ugliness! I also, Renée, I have philosophized. I have thought that there was something horrible in loving a handsome man. Is it not to admit that the senses count for three-quarters in love, which should be divine? When I had recovered from my first fear, I stretched my neck behind the glass to see him again, and well he caught me! By means of a hollow cane he blew to me through the window a letter artistically rolled around a large leaden pellet.

"Mon Dieu! does he think that I have left my window open purposely?" I said to myself; "to close it suddenly would be to make myself his confederate."

I did better, I returned to my window as if I had not heard the sound of his message, as if I had seen nothing, and I said aloud:

"Come and see the stars, Griffith!"

Griffith was sleeping like an old maid. On hearing me, the Moor descended with the quickness of a shadow. He must have died with fear as well as myself, for I did not hear him go away, he remained

doubtless at the foot of the elm. After a good quarter of an hour, during which I drowned myself in the blue of the heaven and swam in an ocean of curiosity, I closed my window, and I got in bed to unroll the fine paper with the care of those scientists who examine in Naples the antique volumes. My fingers seemed to touch fire. "What a horrible power this man exercises over me!" I said to myself. Whereupon I presented the paper to the light to burn it without reading it.—A thought restrained my hand. "What is he writing to me, that he should write to me secretly?" Well, my dear, I burned the letter reflecting that, if all the young girls in the world would have devoured it, I, Armande-Louise-Marie de Chaulieu, *I* should not read it.

The next day at the Italiens, he was at his post; but, First Constitutional Minister though he may be, I do not think that my attitude revealed to him the least agitation of my soul,—I remained absolutely as if I had neither seen nor received anything the night before. I was satisfied with myself, but he was very sad. Poor man, it is so natural in Spain that love should enter by the window! He came between the acts to walk about the corridors. The First Secretary of the Spanish Embassy told me of it in relating to me an action of his which is sublime. As Duc de Soria, he was to marry one of the richest heiresses in Spain, the young Princess Marie Hérédia, whose fortune would have softened for him the rigors of exile; but it appears that,

contrary to the wishes of their fathers who had betrothed them in childhood, Marie loved the youngest De Soria, and my Felipe renounced the Princess Marie in allowing himself to be stripped of his possessions by the King of Spain.

"He must have done this fine thing very simply," I said to the young man.

"You know him then?" he said ingenuously.

My mother smiled.

"What will become of him if he is condemned to death?" I said.

"If he is dead in Spain, he has the right to live in Sardinia."

"Ah! there are also tombs in Spain?" I said, to appear to take this as a jest.

"There is everything in Spain, even to Spaniards of the old time," my mother answered me.

"The King of Sardinia, not without some difficulty, granted to the Baron de Macumer a passport," resumed the young diplomat; "but finally he has become a Sardinian subject, he possesses magnificent fiefs in Sardinia, with the right to administer civil and criminal justice. He has a palace at Sassari. If Ferdinand VII. should die, Macumer would probably enter into diplomacy, and the Court of Turin would make him an ambassador. Although young, he—"

"Ah, he is young?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle—although young, he is one of the most distinguished men of Spain."

I surveyed the audience while listening to the

secretary, and seemed to lend him a slight attention; but, between ourselves, I was in despair at having burned the letter. How would such a man express himself when he loved? and he loved me. To be loved, adored in secret, to have in this audience in which were assembled all the superiorities of Paris a man all to one's self, without any one knowing it! Oh Renée, I comprehended then the Parisian life, and its balls and its fêtes! Everything took on its true color to my eyes. One has need of others when one loves, were it only to sacrifice them to the one loved. I felt within my being another being, a happy one. All my vanities, my self-love, my pride, were flattered. Heaven knows what looks I bestowed upon the world around me!

"Ah, sharp little one!" said the duchess in my ear, smiling.

Yes, my very crafty mother had divined some secret joy in my attitude, and I lowered my flag before this knowing woman. These three words have taught me more of the science of the world than I have been able to acquire in a year, for we are in March. Alas! in a month we shall have no more Italiens. What to do without this adorable music, when one's heart is full of love?

My dear, on my return, with a resolution worthy of a Chaulieu I opened my window to admire a shower. Oh! if men knew the power of seduction which heroic actions exercise on us, they would be indeed great; the most cowardly would become

heroes. That which I had heard of my Spaniard gave me a fever. I was sure that he was there, ready to send me a new letter. Thus I burned nothing: I read. Here is then the first love letter which I have received, madame the reasoner: now each has one.

"Louise, I do not love you because of your sublime beauty; I do not love you because of the wide range of your intellect, of the nobility of your sentiments, of the infinite grace which you give to everything, nor because of your pride, of your royal disdain for that which is not of your sphere, and which in you does not exclude goodness, for you have the charity of the angels; Louise, I love you because you have bent all these haughty grandeurs for a poor exile; because, by a gesture, by a look, you have consoled a man of a state so far below you that he had right only to your pity, but to a generous pity. You are the only woman in the world who has tempered for me the rigor of her eyes; and, as you have let this beneficent regard fall on me when I was a grain in the dust, something which I had never obtained when I had all that a subject could have of power, I wish to let you know, Louise, that you have become dear to me, that I love you for yourself and without any afterthought, far exceeding in so doing the conditions placed by you on a perfect love. Learn then, idol placed by me in the highest of the heavens, that there is in the world a scion of the Saracenic

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU AND THE SPANIARD

"Mon Dieu! does he think that I have left my window open purposely?" I said to myself; "to close it suddenly would be to make myself his confederate."

I did better, I returned to my window as if I had not heard the sound of his message, as if I had seen nothing, and I said aloud:

"Come and see the stars, Griffith!"

Griffith was sleeping like an old maid.

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race whose life belongs to you, of whom you can demand everything as of a slave, and who will honor himself in executing your orders. I have given myself to you without return, and for the sole pleasure of giving myself, for one only of your looks, for that hand offered one morning to your Spanish teacher. You have a servitor, Louise, and nothing else. No, I dare not think that I can ever be loved; but perhaps I may be suffered, and solely because of my devotion. Since that morning when you smiled upon me as a noble young girl who divined the misery of my solitary and betrayed heart, I have enthroned you: you are the absolute sovereign of my life, the queen of my thoughts, the divinity of my heart, the sunshine which enlightens me, the flower of my flowers, the balm of the air which I breathe, the richness of my blood, the light in which I sleep. One thought only troubles this happiness,—that you do not know that you have for yourself a devotion without bounds, a faithful arm, a blind slave, a mute agent, a treasure, for I am no longer anything but the guardian of all which I possess; in short, that you do not know of a heart to which you could confide everything, the heart of an old ancestress of whom you could ask anything, a father from whom you could claim all protection, a friend, a brother; all these sentiments are lacking around you, I know it. I have surprised the secret of your isolation! My hardihood is born of my desire to reveal to you the extent of your possessions. Accept all, Louise, you will have given me the only

life which there is for me in the world, that of devoting myself. In placing upon me the collar of servitude, you do not expose yourself to anything: I shall never demand any other thing than the pleasure of knowing myself yours. Do not even say to me that you will never love me: that should be so, I know it; I should love from a distance, without hope and for myself. I greatly desire to know if you will accept me for your servant, and I have racked my brain in order to find a proof which would signify it and which will in no way impair your dignity in informing me, for I have now been yours for many days, without your knowing it. Then you will say it to me by having in your hand in the evening, at the Italiens, a bouquet composed of a white camellia and of a red camellia, the image of all the blood of a man at the orders of an adored candor. Everything will be said then: at any hour, in ten years as to-morrow, whatever you wish that it may be possible for a man to do, that will be done as soon as you demand it of your happy servant,

"FELIPE HÉNAREZ."

P. S. My dear, admit that the grand seigneurs know how to love! What a bound of an African lion! what contained ardor! what faith! what sincerity! what a grandeur of soul in abasement! I felt myself little and I asked myself, all abashed: "What to do?"—The quality of a great man is to

set aside all ordinary calculations. He is sublime and affecting, ingenuous and gigantic. In one sole letter, he is beyond the hundred letters of Lovelace and of Saint-Preux. Oh! this is the true love, without quibbling: it is or it is not; but, when it is, it should produce itself in its immensity. Now, I am stripped of all my coquetries. To refuse or to accept! I am between these two alternatives without a pretext to shelter my irresolution. All discussion is suppressed. It is no longer Paris, it is Spain or the Orient; in short, it is the Abencerrage who speaks, who kneels before the Catholic Eve bringing to her his scimitar, his horse and his head. Shall I accept this last of the Moors? Read over again often this Hispano-Saracen letter, my Renée, and you will see there that love carries away all the Judaic stipulations of your philosophy. See, Renée, I have your letter on my heart, you have made life all bourgeois for me. Have I any need to act cunningly? Am I not eternal mistress of this lion who changes his roarings into humble and religious sighs? Oh! how he must have roared in his den in the Rue Hillerin-Bertin! I know where he lives, I have his card: F., BARON DE MACUMER. He has rendered all reply impossible for me, there is nothing to be done but to throw in his face two camellias. What an infernal science is possessed by love pure, true, ingenuous! See then what there is of the greatest for a woman's heart reduced to a simple and easy action. Oh Asia! I have read *The Thousand and One Nights,* and here

is the spirit of them: two flowers and all is said. We traversed the fourteen volumes of Clarissa Harlowe with a bouquet. I twist myself before this letter like a cord in the fire. Take or do not take your two camellias. Yes or no, kill or make live! Finally, a voice cried to me: "Prove him!" Thus I will prove him.

XVI

THE SAME TO THE SAME

March.

I was dressed in white: I had white camellias in my hair and a white camellia in my hand; my mother had red ones,—I could take one from her if I wished. I felt within myself an indescribable desire to sell *him* his red camellia by a little hesitation, and not to make my decision but on the ground itself. I was looking my very best! Griffith entreated me to let her contemplate me for a moment. The solemnity of this evening and the drama of the secret consent gave me color, I had on each cheek a red camellia spread upon a white camellia!

One o'clock.

All the world admired me, one only adored me. He lowered his head on seeing me with a white camellia in the hand, and I saw him become white as the flower when I took a red one from my

mother. To have come with the two flowers might have been merely accidental; but this action was a response. I had then emphasized my avowal! They were giving *Romeo and Juliet,* and, as you do not know the duet of these two lovers, you cannot comprehend the happiness of two neophytes of love listening to this divine expression of tenderness. As I went to bed I heard steps upon the resounding pavement of the side alley of the boulevard. Oh! now, my angel, my heart is on fire and my head. What is he doing? what does he think? Has he a thought, one only, to which I am foreign? Is he the slave always ready which he told me he was? How to assure myself of it? Has he in his soul the slightest suspicion that my acceptance carries with it anything blamable, any return whatever, any thanks? I am given over to all the petty quibbling of the women in *Cyrus* and in the *Astræa* to the subtleties of the Courts of Love. Does he know that in love the very slightest actions of women are the result of a world of reflection, of inward combats, of lost victories! Of what is he thinking at this moment? How to order him to write to me in the evening the details of his day? He is my slave, I should keep him occupied and I am going to overwhelm him with labor.

Sunday morning.

I slept very little this morning. It is noon. I have just caused Griffith to write the following letter:

"TO MONSIEUR LE BARON DE MACUMER.

"Mademoiselle de Chaulieu directs me, Monsieur le Baron, to ask of you the copy of a letter which was written to her by one of her friends, which is in her handwriting and which you have taken away.

"Accept, etc.

"GRIFFITH."

My dear, Griffith went out, she went to the Rue Hillerin-Bertin, she had this billet-doux handed to my slave, who returned me in an envelope my programme spotted with tears. He obeyed. Oh my dear, he ought to have kept it. Another would have refused in writing to me a letter full of flattery; but the Saracen has been what he promised to be,—he obeyed. I am affected to the point of tears.

XVII

THE SAME TO THE SAME

April 2.

Yesterday the weather was magnificent, I arrayed myself like a young girl who is beloved and who wishes to please. At my entreaty, my father has given me the prettiest turnout that it is possible to see in Paris,—two dapple-gray horses and a calèche of the utmost elegance. I tried my new equipage. I was like a flower under an umbrella lined with white silk. As I ascended the avenue of the Champs-Élysées, I saw coming toward me my Abencerrage

on a horse of the most admirable beauty,—the men, who now-a-days are almost all perfect horse dealers, stopped to see it, to examine it. He bowed to me, and I made to him a friendly sign of encouragement; he moderated the pace of his horse, and I was able to say to him:

"You will not take it ill, Monsieur le Baron, that I have asked my letter of you, it was useless for you.—You have already exceeded this programme,—" I added in a low voice. "You have a horse which causes you to be much remarked," I said to him.

"My intendant in Sardinia sent it to me through pride, for this horse of the Arab race was born in my stable."

This morning, my dear, Hénarez was on an English sorrel horse, still a very handsome one but which no longer attracted attention,—the slight mocking criticism of my words had been sufficient. He bowed to me, and I replied by a slight inclination of the head. The Duc d'Angoulême has bought Macumer's horse. My slave comprehended that he had departed from the desired simplicity in attracting to himself the attention of the gazers. A man should be remarked for himself, and not for his horse or for other things. To have a too handsome horse seems to me as ridiculous as to wear a big diamond in his shirt front. I was delighted to catch him in a fault, and perhaps there was in his act a little self-love, permissible in a poor outlaw. This childishness pleases me. O my ancient reasoner! do you amuse yourself with my love affairs as much

as I am saddened by your sombre philosophy ? Dear Philip II. in petticoats, do you truly go riding in my calèche ? Do you see this velvet glance, humble and expressive, proud of its servitude, which is directed to me in passing by this man truly great who wears my livery, and who has always in his buttonhole a red camellia, whilst I have always a white one in my hand? What enlightenment comes with love! How well I comprehend Paris! Now, everything in it seems to me spiritual and intelligent. Yes, love is there more beautiful, grander, more charming than anywhere else. Decidedly, I have recognized that I could never torment, disquiet a stupid man, nor have the least empire over him. It is only the superior men who comprehend us thoroughly and on whom we can act. Oh! poor friend, forgive me, I have forgotten our L'Estorade; but have you not told me that you are going to make a genius of him? Oh! I guess why,—you are bringing him up with the utmost care so that you may be comprehended some day. Adieu, I am a little foolish and do not wish to continue.

XVIII

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO LOUISE DE CHAULIEU

April.

Dear angel, or should I not rather say, dear demon ? you have distressed me without wishing to, and if we were not the same soul, I would say wounded;

but does one not also wound one's self? How readily it is to be seen that you have not yet seriously considered that word *indissoluble* applied to the contract which unites a woman to a man! I do not wish to contradict the philosophers nor the legislators, they are quite able to contradict themselves; but, dear, by rendering marriage irrevocable and by imposing upon it a formula the same for all and pitiless, each union has been made an entirely dissimilar thing, as dissimilar as are the individuals among themselves; each one of them has its interior laws different,—those of a marriage in the country, where the two beings are ceaselessly in each other's presence, are not those of a city household, where life is marked by more distractions; and those of a household in Paris, where life passes like a torrent, will not be those of a provincial marriage where life is less agitated. If the conditions vary according to the localities, they vary still more according to the characters. The wife of a man of genius has only to allow himself to be conducted, and the wife of a foolish man should, under penalty of the greatest misfortunes, assume the direction of the machine if she feels herself more intelligent than he. Perhaps, after all, it is reflection and reason which arrive at that which we call depravation. For us, depravation, is it not the introduction of calculation into the feelings? A passion which reasons is depraved; it is only beautiful when involuntary and in those sublime outbursts which exclude all egotism. Ah! sooner or later you will say, my dear:

"Yes! falsehood is as necessary to the woman as her corset, if by falsehood is understood the silence of her who has the courage not to speak, if by falsehood is understood the forethought necessary for the future." Every married woman learns at her own expense the social laws, which are incompatible in many respects with those of nature. We could have in marriage a dozen children, by marrying at our present age; and, if we had them, we would commit a dozen crimes, we would make a dozen misfortunes. Would we not be delivering to poverty and to despair charming beings? whilst two children are two happinesses, two benefits, two creatures in harmony with the moral and the actual laws. The natural law and the code are enemies, and we are the ground on which they combat. Would you call depravation the wisdom of the wife who watches to see that the family does not ruin itself by itself? One calculation or a thousand, all is lost for the heart. This atrocious calculation, you will make it one day yourself, beautiful Baronne de Macumer, when you will be the happy and proud wife of the man whom you adore; or rather this superior man will spare you the trouble of it, for he will make it himself. You see, dear foolish one, that we have studied the code in its relations with conjugal love. You will know that we are accountable only to God and to ourselves for the means which we employ to perpetuate happiness in the bosom of our households; and it is much better that calculation should direct there than unreflecting

love, which brings there mourning, quarrels or disunion. I have cruelly studied the rôle of wife and of mother of family. Yes, dear angel, we have sublime falsehoods to act in order to be the noble creature that we are in fulfilling our duties. You tax me with falsehood because I wish to measure out day by day to Louis the knowledge of myself; but is it not a too intimate acquaintance which causes disunions? I wish to occupy him much, in order to distract him a great deal from myself, in the name of his own proper happiness; and such is not the calculation of passion. If tenderness is inexhaustible, love is not: thus it is a worthy undertaking for an honest woman to distribute it sagely through all her life. At the risk of seeming to you execrable, I will say to you that I persist in my principles, believing myself very great and very generous. Virtue, mignonne, is a principle the manifestations of which differ according to the surroundings: the virtue of Provence, that of Constantinople, that of London and that of Paris present effects perfectly dissimilar without ceasing to be virtue. Each human life offers in its tissue the most irregular combinations; but, seen from a certain height, all resemble each other. If I wish to see Louis unhappy and bring about a bodily separation, I would only have to follow in his leash. I have not had, like you, the happiness of encountering a superior being, but perhaps I shall have the pleasure of rendering him superior, and I give you a rendezvous in Paris in five years. You will be

taken in yourself, and you will tell me that I have deceived myself, that Monsieur de l'Estorade is intrinsically remarkable. As to those beautiful loves, to those emotions which I only experience through you; as to those nocturnal stations on the balcony, in the light of the stars; as to those excessive adorations, as to those deifications of ourselves, I have learned that it is necessary to renounce them. Your glowing expansion in life radiates around you at your own pleasure; mine is circumscribed, it has the bounding wall of La Crampade: and you reproach me with the precautions which a fragile, a secret, a poor happiness demands in order to become durable, rich and mysterious! I thought I had found the graces of a mistress in my estate of a wife, and you have almost made me blush for myself. Between us two, which is wrong, which is right? Perhaps we are both equally right and wrong, and perhaps society sells us very dearly our laces, our titles and our children! For myself, I have my red camellias, they are on my lips, in smiles which flourish for those two beings, the father and the son, to whom I am devoted, at once slave and mistress. But, dear, your last letters have caused me to perceive all that I have lost! You have taught me the extent of the sacrifices of a married woman. I had scarcely cast my eyes on those beautiful wild meadows in which you leap and sport, and I will not speak to you of some tears dried in reading your letter; but regret is not remorse, although it

is somewhat related. You have said to me: "Marriage renders philosophical!" Alas! no; I have truly felt it when I wept in knowing you carried away by the torrent of love. But my father has caused me to read one of the most profound writers of our provinces, one of the heirs of Bossuet, one of those cruel politicians whose pages beget conviction. While you were reading *Corinne,* I was reading *Bonald,* and this is the secret of my philosophy,—the Family, holy and strong, appeared before me. Therefore, according to Bonald, your father was right in his discourse. Adieu, my dear imagination, my friend, you who are my folly!

XIX

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE

Well, you are a love of a woman, my Renée; and I will now agree that it is honest to deceive,—are you content? Moreover, the man who loves us belongs to us; we have the right to make of him a fool or a man of genius; but between ourselves, we oftener make of him a fool. You will make of yours a man of genius, and you will keep your secret,—two magnificent actions! Ah! if there were no paradise, you would pay dearly, for you are vowing yourself to a voluntary martyrdom. You wish to make him ambitious and to keep him loving! but, child that you are, it is quite enough to keep him loving. Up to what point is

calculation virtue or is virtue calculation? *Hein?* We will not quarrel on this point, since there is Bonald. We are and wish to be virtuous; but at this moment I believe that, notwithstanding your charming knaveries, you are better than I. Yes, I am a young woman horribly false: I love Felipe and I hide it from him with an infamous dissimulation. I would wish to see him leap from his tree to the top of the wall, from the top of the wall to my balcony; and, if he did as I wish, I would overwhelm him with my scorn. You see, I am of a terrible honesty. Who hinders me? what mysterious power prevents me from telling this dear Felipe all the happiness which he communicates to me in floods by his love pure, entire, grand, secret, complete? Madame de Mirbel is executing my portrait, I intend to give it to him, my dear. That which surprises me each day the more is the activity which love gives to life. What an interest do the hours take on, the actions, the smallest things! and what an admirable blending of the past, of the future, in the present! One lives in the three tenses of the verb. Is it still so when one has been happy? Oh! answer me, tell me what is happiness, if it calms or if it irritates. I am of a mortal uneasiness, I know no longer how to conduct myself: there is in my heart a force which attracts me towards him, notwithstanding reason and the conventionalities. Finally, I understand your curiosity with Louis, are you content? The happiness which Felipe has in being mine, his

distant love and his obedience make me impatient as much as his profound respect irritated me when he was only my Spanish teacher. I am tempted to call to him when he passes: "Imbecile, if you love me as a picture, what would it be then if you knew me!"

Oh Renée, you burn my letters, do you not? For myself, I will burn yours. If other eyes than ours should read these thoughts which are poured from heart to heart, I would send Felipe to crush them and to kill a few more people for still greater surety.

Monday.

Ah! Renée, how shall we sound the heart of a man? My father should present to me your Monsieur Bonald, and, since he is so wise, I will ask it of him. God is very happy to be able to read the depths of the heart. Shall I always be an angel for this man? That is the whole question.

If ever in a gesture, in a look, in the accent of a word, I should perceive a diminution of that respect which he had for me when he was my teacher of Spanish, I feel myself strong enough to forget everything! "Wherefore these great words, these grand resolutions?" you will say to me. Ah! for this reason, my dear. My charming father, who conducts himself toward me like an old *cavaliere servente* with an Italian lady, has had, as I told you, my portrait executed by Madame de Mirbel. I have found means to have a sufficiently good copy

executed to be able to give it to the duke and to send the original to Felipe. This sending was done yesterday, accompanied by these three lines:

"Don Felipe, your entire devotion is answered by a blind confidence: time will say whether it is not to accord too much grandeur to a man."

The recompense is great, it has the air of a promise, and, horrible thing, an invitation; but, what will seem to you still more horrible, I wish that the recompense should express promise and invitation without going so far as to offer them. If in his reply there is: "My Louise," or only: "Louise" he is lost!

Tuesday.

No, he is not lost! This constitutional minister is an adorable lover. Here is his letter:

"Every moment which I pass without seeing you I remain occupied with you, my eyes closed to all things and fixed in meditation upon your image, which never revealed itself with sufficient promptness in the dusky palace traversed by dreams and in which you diffuse light. Henceforth my sight shall repose on this marvelous ivory, on this talisman, I should say: for me, your blue eyes become animated, and the painting immediately becomes a reality. The delay of this letter is owing to my eagerness to enjoy this contemplation during which

I would say to you all that I should keep silent on. Yes, since yesterday, shut up alone with you I have given myself up, for the first time in my life, to a happiness complete, entire, infinite. If you could see where I have placed you, between the Virgin and God, you would comprehend in what agonies I have passed the night; but in telling you, I would not wish to offend you, for there would be so many torments for me in a look deprived of that angelic goodness which makes me live, that I ask pardon of you in advance. If then, queen of my life and of my soul, you would but grant me a thousandth part of the love I bear for you!

"The *if* of this constant prayer has ravaged my soul. I was between belief and error, between life and death, between the darkness and the light. A criminal is not more agitated during the discussion of his doom than I am in accusing myself to you of this audacity. The smile expressed on your lips, and which I have seen again from moment to moment, calmed these storms aroused by the fear of displeasing you. During my lifetime, no one, not even my mother, has ever smiled upon me. The beautiful young girl who was destined for me rejected my heart and loved my brother. My efforts in politics met with only defeat. I have never seen in the eyes of my king anything but a desire for vengeance; and we have been such enemies, since our youth, that he considered the vote by which the Cortes elected me to power as a cruel injury. However strong you may make the soul, doubt at

least will enter it. Moreover, I am just to myself; —I know the bad grace of my exterior, and know how difficult it is to appreciate my heart through such an envelope. To be beloved, it was no longer anything but a dream when I saw you. Thus, when I attached myself to you, I comprehended that devotion alone could excuse my tenderness. In contemplating this portrait, in watching this smile full of divine promises, a hope which I did not permit myself has irradiated my soul. This light of the morning is incessantly combated by the shadows of doubt, by the fear of offending you in letting it appear. No, you cannot yet love me, I feel it; but, in proportion as you will have experienced the power, the duration, the extent of my inexhaustible affection, you will give it a little place in your heart. If my ambition is an insult, you will tell me so without anger, I will return to my part; but, if you would wish to endeavor to love me, do not let it be known without minute precautions to him who puts all the happiness of his life in only serving you."

My dear, on reading these last words, I seemed to see him pale as he was the evening in which I said to him, in showing him the camellia, that I accepted the treasures of his devotion. I saw in these submissive phrases something quite different from a simple flower of flattery in the manner of lovers, and I felt something like a great movement within myself,—the breath of happiness.

The weather was detestable, it was not possible for me to go to the Bois without giving rise to strange suspicions; for my mother who often goes out notwithstanding the rain, remained in her own apartments, alone.

Wednesday evening.

I have just seen *him*, at the Opera. My dear, he is no longer the same man: he came into our box, presented by the Sardinian ambassador. After having seen in my eyes that his audacity did not displease, he seemed to me as though he were bodily embarrassed and he said *Mademoiselle* to the Marquise d'Espard. His eyes shed glances which made a light more vivid than that of the sconces. Finally he went out, like a man who feared to commit an extravagance.

"The Baron de Macumer is in love!" said Madame de Maufrigneuse to my mother.

"That is all the more extraordinary as he is a fallen minister," replied my mother.

I had the strength to look at Madame d'Espard, Madame de Maufrigneuse, and my mother with the curiosity of one who does not know a foreign language and who wishes to know what is said; but I was inwardly a prey to a voluptuous joy in which it seemed to me that my soul was bathed. There is only one word to explain to you that which I felt, that is ravishment. Felipe loves so much, that I find him worthy of being loved. I am exactly the principle of his life, and I hold in my hand the

thread which conducts his thoughts. Finally, if we must tell everything to each other, there is within me the most violent desire to see him overcome all obstacles, to come to me to ask me of myself, in order to know if this furious love would become humble and calm before only one of my glances.

Ah! my dear, I have stopped and am all trembling. While writing to you, I heard outside a slight noise and I rose. From my window, I saw him walking along the crest of the wall, at the risk of killing himself. I went to the window of my chamber and I made him only one sign; he leaped from the wall, which is ten feet high; then he ran out on the road, just so far that I could see him, to show me that he had not hurt himself. This attention, at the moment when he must have been dazed by his fall, so much affected me, that I wept without knowing why. Poor ugly fellow! what did he come to seek? what did he wish to say to me?

I do not dare to write my thoughts, and I am going to bed in my joy, thinking of everything we would say to each other if we were together. Farewell, beautiful mute. I have not the time to complain to you of your silence, but here it is more than a month since I have had any news of you! Have you, by chance, become happy? Have you no longer that free will which rendered you so proud and which, this evening, has almost abandoned me?

XX

RENÉE DE L'ESTORADE TO LOUISE DE CHAULIEU

May.

If love is the life of the world, why do the austere philosophers suppress it in marriage? Why does society take for its supreme law the sacrifice of the Woman to the Family, thus necessarily creating a hidden struggle in the heart of marriage? a struggle foreseen by it and so dangerous, that it has invented powers to arm the man against us, divining that we could annul everything either by the power of tenderness or by the persistence of a hidden hatred. I see at this moment, in marriage, two opposing forces which the legislator should have re-united; when will they be re-united? that is what I said to myself while reading your letter. Oh! dear, one only of your letters ruins that edifice built by the great writer of L'Aveyron, and in which I had taken up my residence with a gentle satisfaction! Laws have been made by old men, the women perceive it; they have very sagely decreed that conjugal love exempt from passion should not debase us, and that a woman should give herself without love once the law permitted a man to make her his. Preoccupied with the family, they have imitated nature, anxious only to perpetuate the species. I was a being formerly, and I am now a thing! It is more than one tear that I have shed apart, alone, and which I would wish to give in

exchange for a consoling smile. From whence comes the inequality of our destinies? Lawful love makes your soul greater. For you, virtue is to be found in pleasure. You will only suffer of your own free will. Your duty, if you marry your Felipe, will become the sweetest, the most expansive of sentiments. Our future is big with the reply, and I am waiting for it with an unquiet curiosity.

You love, you are adored. Oh, dear, give yourself up entirely to this beautiful poem which has so much occupied us! This beauty of the woman, so fine and so spiritualized in you, God has made it thus that it might charm and please: he has his designs. Yes, my angel, guard well the secret of your tenderness, and submit Felipe to the subtle proofs which we invented to know if the lover whom we dreamed of should be worthy of us. Above all, know rather if you love him than if he loves you: nothing is more deceiving than the mirage produced in our soul by curiosity, by desire, by belief in happiness. You who, alone of us two, remain intact, dear, do not risk yourself without security in the dangerous bargain of an irrevocable marriage, I entreat you! Sometimes a gesture, a word, a look, in a conversation without witnesses, when the souls are stripped of their worldly hypocrisy, will light up abysses. You are sufficiently noble, sufficiently sure of yourself, to be able to enter courageously in paths where others lose themselves. You cannot imagine in what anxieties I am. Notwithstanding the distance, I see you, I

experience all your emotions. Therefore, do not fail to write me, omit nothing! Your letters make for me a passionate life in the midst of my household so simple, so tranquil, all alike as a highroad on a sunless day. That which takes place here, my angel, is a series of quibblings with myself concerning which I wish to keep the secret to-day, I will tell you about it later. I give myself, and take myself back with a sombre pertinacity, passing from discouragement to hope. Perhaps I have asked of life more happiness than it owes us. At a youthful age we are only too easily led to wish that the ideal and the positive should be in accord! My reflections, and now I make them all alone, seated at the foot of a rock in my park, have led me to think that love in marriage is a chance on which it is impossible to base the law which should govern all. My philosopher of L'Aveyron is right to consider the family as the sole possible social unity and to submit the woman to it as she has been in all times. The solution of this great question, almost terrible for us, is in the first child which we have. Thus would I wish to be a mother, were it only to give food to the devouring activity of my soul.

Louis is always of an adorable goodness, his love is active and my tenderness is abstract; he is happy, he gathers for himself alone the flowers, without concerning himself with the efforts of the earth that produces them. Happy egotism! Whatever it may cost me, I lend myself to his illusions, as a mother, according to the ideas which I have of a

mother, sacrifices herself to procure a pleasure for her child. His joy is so profound that it closes his eyes and throws its reflections even upon me. I deceive him by the smile or by the look full of satisfaction which the certainty of giving him happiness causes me. Thus, the friendly appellation which I give him in our home is "my child!" I am waiting for the fruit of so many sacrifices which shall be a secret between God, yourself and me. Maternity is an undertaking for which I have opened an enormous credit, it owes me too much to-day, I fear I shall not be sufficiently paid: its charge is to develop all my energy and to make my heart greater, to recompense me for unlimited joys. O my God, may I not be deceived! in it lies all my future, and, a frightful thing to think, that of my virtue.

XXI

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO RENÉE DE L'ESTORADE

June.

Dear married lamb, your letter came very apropos to enable me to justify to myself a hardihood of which I have been thinking night and day. There is an unspeakable appetite in me for things unknown, or, if you like, forbidden, which disquiets me and reveals to me a combat within me between the laws of the world and those of nature. I do not know if nature is stronger within me than society, but I surprised myself by concluding a transaction

between these two powers. In short, to speak clearly, I wished to talk with Felipe, alone with him, during an hour of the night, under the linden trees, at the end of our garden. Assuredly this wish is natural in a girl who deserves the name of lively, clever gossip, which the duchess gives me laughing and which my father confirms. Nevertheless, I find this fault prudent and wise. While rewarding so many nights passed at the foot of my wall, I wish to know what Felipe will think of my escapade, and to judge him in such a moment; make of him my dear husband if he deifies my fault; or never see him again if he is not more respectful and more trembling than when he bows to me in passing on horseback in the Champs-Élysées. As to the world, I risk less in seeing my lover thus than in smiling upon him in the house of Madame de Maufrigneuse or in that of the old Marquise de Beauséant, where we are now surrounded by spies, for God knows what looks follow a girl who is suspected of paying attention to a monster like Macumer. Oh! if you knew how much I am inwardly agitated in thinking of this project, how much I am occupied in seeing in advance how it will be realized! I have regretted you, we would have chatted during several little hours, lost in the labyrinths of uncertainty and experiencing in advance all the good or evil fortunes of a first rendezvous at night, in the shadow and in the silence, under the fine linden trees of the Hôtel de Chaulieu, pierced by the thousand rays of the moon. I palpitated all

alone in saying to myself: "Ah! Renée, where are you?" Your letter then put fire to the powder, and my last scruples vanished. I threw from my window to my stupefied adorer the exact design of a key of the little gate at the end of the garden, with this note:

"It is wished to prevent you from committing foolish actions. By breaking your neck, you will deprive of honor the person whom you say you love. Are you worthy of a new proof of esteem and do you wish that one should speak with you at the hour when the moon leaves in shadow the linden trees at the end of the garden?"

Yesterday morning, at one o'clock, at the momen when Griffith was about to go to bed, I said to her:

"Get your shawl and accompany me, my dear; I wish to go to the end of the garden without any one knowing it!"

She did not say a word and followed me. What sensations, my Renée! for, after having waited for him, a prey to a charming little anguish, I saw him gliding along like a shadow. When we reached the garden without any disturbance I said to Griffith:

"Do not be astonished, there is the Baron de Macumer, and it is because of him that I have brought you here."

She said nothing.

"What do you wish with me?" said Felipe to me in a voice the emotion of which betrayed that the

sound of our dresses in the silence of the night and that of our feet on the sand, light as it was, had made him beside himself.

"I wish to say to you what I did not know how to write," I replied to him.

Griffith went away six steps from us. The night was one of those balmy nights, fragrant with flowers; I experienced in this moment an intoxicating pleasure at finding myself almost alone with him in the soft darkness of the linden trees, beyond which the garden glittered all the more that the façade of the Hôtel reflected the pale light of the moon. This contrast offered a vague image of the mystery of our love which should finish by the brilliant publicity of marriage. After a moment given by both of us to the pleasure of the situation, novel for both of us, and in which we were both equally astonished, I recovered the power of speech.

"Although I do not fear calumny, I do not wish any longer that you should climb into that tree," I said to him, indicating the elm, "nor on that wall. We have done enough behaving, you like a schoolboy, and I like a boarding-school girl: let us elevate our sentiments to the height of our destinies. If you had been killed in your fall, I should have died dishonored—"

I looked at him, he was pale.

"And if you had been surprised thus, my mother or I, we would have been suspected—"

"Forgive me," he said in a feeble voice.

"Pass along on the boulevard, I will hear your

step, and when I wish to see you I will open my window; but I will not make you run this risk and I will not run it myself except on some serious occasion. Why have you compelled me, by your imprudence, to expose myself to another and to give you an unworthy opinion of me?"

I saw tears in his eyes which seemed to me the finest reply in the world.

"You may believe," I said to him smiling, "that my enterprise is excessively hazardous—"

After one or two turns which we took in silence under the trees, he found words to express himself.

"You must think me stupid; and I am so intoxicated with happiness that I am without strength and without wit; but know at least that in my eyes you sanctify your actions by this alone—that you permit them to yourself. The respect which I have for you can only be compared with that which I have for God. Moreover, Miss Griffith is there."

"She is there for others and not for us, Felipe," I said to him quickly.

This man, my dear, understood me.

"I know well," he answered, casting at me the most humble glance, "that if she were not there, everything would take place between us just as if she saw us: if we are not before men we are always in the presence of God, and we have as much need of our own respect as of that of the world."

"Thanks, Felipe," I said to him, offering him my hand with a gesture which you should have seen. "A woman, and you may take me for a

woman, is well disposed to love a man who comprehends her. Oh! only disposed," I added, placing a finger upon my lips. "I do not wish that you should have any more hope than I should wish to give you. My heart will only belong to him who will know how to read it and to know it thoroughly. Our sentiments, without being absolutely the same, should have the same breadth, should be at the same elevation. I do not seek to make myself greater, for those which I think to be good qualities include doubtless some defects; but, if I did not have them, I should be exceedingly sorry."

"After having accepted me for your servitor, you have permitted me to love you," said he trembling and watching me at each word: "I have more than I at first desired."

"But," I replied to him quickly, "I find your lot to be better than mine; I should not complain to change them, and this change concerns you."

"It is for me now to thank you," he replied: "I know the duties of a loyal lover. I should prove to you that I am worthy of you, and you have the right to put me to the proof as long as you please. You can, my God! reject me if I betray your hope."

"I know that you love me," I answered. "Up to the present"—I cruelly accented this word—"you are the preferred, this is why you are here."

We then recommenced our little promenade still talking, and I must avow to you that, when put at his ease, my Spaniard displayed the veritable eloquence of the heart in expressing to me, not his

passion, but his tenderness; for he was able to explain his sentiments to me by an adorable comparison with the divine love. His penetrating voice, which lent a peculiar value to his thoughts so delicate in themselves, resembled the notes of the nightingale. He spoke in a low voice, in the full medium tones of his delightful organ, and his phrases followed each other with the precipitation of a boiling over,—his heart overflowed in them.

"Cease," I said to him, "I shall stay here longer than I should."

And with a gesture I dismissed him.

"You are engaged, mademoiselle," said Griffith to me.

"Perhaps so in England, but not in France," I replied negligently. "I wish to make a marriage of love and not to be deceived,—that is all."

You see, my dear, love does not come to me, I have done as Mohammed did with his mountain.

Friday.

I have seen my slave again: he has become fearful, he has assumed a mysterious and devout air which pleases me; he appears to me to be penetrated with my glory and my puissance. But nothing, neither in his looks, nor in his manners, would permit any soothsayer in the world to suspect in him that infinite love which I see. However, my dear, I am not carried away, dominated, conquered; on the contrary, I conquer, I dominate and I carry away—. In short, I reason. Ah! I should well like

to find again that fear which was awakened in me by the fascination of the teacher of languages, of the bourgeois to whom I refused myself. There are two loves,—that which commands and that which obeys; they are distinct and give birth to two passions which are unlike; to have her full experience of life, perhaps a woman should know both of these. Can these two passions become confounded? A man in whom we inspire love, will he inspire it in us? Will Felipe be one day my master? Shall I tremble as he trembles? These questions make me shudder. He is very blind! In his place, I should have found Mademoiselle de Chaulieu under those linden trees very coquettishly cold, formal, calculating. No, it is not loving, that, it is sporting with fire. Felipe always pleases me, but I find myself now calm and very much at my ease. No more obstacles, what a terrible word. Everything is quieting down within me, subsiding, and I am afraid to interrogate myself. He was wrong to hide from me the violence of his love, he has left me mistress of myself. In short, I do not have the benefits of this species of fault. Yes, dear, whatever pleasure is given me by the remembrance of that half hour passed under the trees, I find this pleasure very much inferior to the emotions which I experienced in saying to myself: "Shall I go there? Shall I not go there? Shall I write to him? Shall I not write to him?" Will it be thus with all our pleasures? Will it be better to postpone them than to enjoy them? Will hope be better

than possession? The rich, are they the poor? Have we, both of us, given too much extent to the feelings in developing beyond measure the forces of our imagination? There are moments in which this idea chills me. Do you know why? I dream of going again to the end of the garden without Griffith. How far shall I go thus? The imagination has no bounds, and the pleasures have. Tell me, dear doctor in a corset, how to conciliate these two conclusions of a woman's existence?

XXII

LOUISE TO FELIPE

I am not satisfied with you. If you did not weep in reading Racine's *Bérénice*, and not find it the most horrible of tragedies, you will not in the least comprehend me, we shall never understand each other: let us break off, let us see each other no more, forget me; for, if you do not reply to me in a satisfactory manner, I will forget you, you will become Monsieur le Baron de Macumer for me, or, rather, you will become to me nothing, you will be for me as if you had never existed. Yesterday, at the house of Madame d'Espard, you had an inexplicable air of contentment which excessively displeased me. You appeared certain of being loved. Finally, the freedom of your wit terrified me, and I did not in the least recognize in you, at that moment, the servitor which you professed yourself

in your first letter. Far from being completely absorbed as should be the man who loves, you found clever speeches to utter. This is not the way that a true believer comports himself,—he is always crushed before the divinity. If I am not a being superior to all other women, if you do not see in me the source of your life, I am less than a woman, because then I am simply a woman. You have awakened my mistrust, Felipe: it has complained so loudly as to overcome the voice of tenderness, and, when I consider our past, I find that I have a right to be mistrustful. Know it well, Monsieur the Constitutional Minister of all the Spains, I have profoundly reflected on the poor condition of my sex. My innocence has held lighted torches in her hands without burning herself. Listen attentively to what my young experience has said to me and which I repeat to you. In every other thing, duplicity, the breaking of faith, the unfulfilled promises find judges, and the judges inflict punishments; but it is not so in love, which should be at the same time the victim, the accuser, the advocate, the tribunal and the executioner; for the most atrocious perfidies, the most horrible crimes remain unknown, are committed by one soul on another without witnesses, and it is in the interests of the assassinated one himself to keep silence. Love has therefore its own code, its own vengeance: there is nothing for the world to see in it. Now, I have resolved, for myself, to never pardon a crime, and there is nothing superficial in the things of the

heart. Yesterday, you had the air of a man certain of being loved. You would be wrong not to have this certainty, but you would be criminal in my eyes if it deprived you of the ingenuous grace which the anxieties of hope gave you formerly. I do not wish to see you timid or stupid, I do not wish that you should tremble to lose my affection, for that would be an insult; but I do not wish any more that security should permit you to carry your love lightly. You should never be freer than I am myself. If you do not know the torture which one thought of doubt inflicts on the soul, tremble lest I should teach it to you. By a single glance, I have delivered my soul to you, and you have read it. You have had given to you the purest sentiments which ever arose in the soul of a young girl. The reflection, the meditation of which I have spoken to you have only enriched the head; but, when the injured heart shall ask for counsel from the intelligence, believe me, the young girl will then partake of the angel who knows and is capable of all. I swear to you, Felipe, if you love me as I believe, and if you should allow me to suspect the least enfeebling of the sentiments of fear, of obedience, of respectful waiting, of submissive desire which you have declared; if I should perceive some day the least diminution in that first and beautiful love which from your soul came into mine, I would say nothing to you, I would not weary you by a letter more or less dignified, more or less proud or angry, or only scolding like this one; I would say nothing,

Felipe,—you would see me sad like those who feel the coming of death; but I should not die without having inflicted upon you the most horrible discredit, without having dishonored in the most shameful manner the one whom you should love and without planting in your heart eternal regrets, for you would see me lost in this world in the eyes of men and forever accursed in the other world.

Therefore, do not render me jealous of any other happy Louise, of a Louise loved holily, of a Louise whose soul should expand in a love without shadow, and who would possess, as in Dante's sublime expression,

"Senza brama, sicura ricchezza!" *

Know that I have searched through his *Inferno* to find the most sorrowful of tortures, a terrible moral chastisement with which I shall associate the eternal vengeance of God.

Yesterday, by your conduct, you pierced my heart with the cold and cruel blade of suspicion. Do you understand? I doubted you, and I suffered so much from it that I do not wish to doubt any more. If you find my service too hard, leave it, I shall not want you in the least. Do I not know that you are a man of character? Reserve all the flowers of your soul for me, have only dull eyes for the world, never place yourself in a position to receive a flattery, a eulogy, a compliment from anyone whomsoever. Come to see me overwhelmed with hatred, having

* To possess, without fear, riches which cannot be lost.

excited a thousand calumnies or crushed with contempt, come to me to say that women do not understand you, walk with you without seeing you, and that not one of them will ever know how to love you, you will then learn what there is for you in the heart and in the love of Louise. Our treasures should be so well buried, that the whole world should trample them under their feet without suspecting their existence. If you were handsome, I should doubtless not have paid the least attention to you and should not have discovered in you the world of reasons which makes love bloom; and, although we do know them no more than we know how the sun makes the flowers bloom or the fruits ripen, nevertheless, among these reasons, there is one which I know and which charms me. Your sublime visage has its character, its language, its physiognomy only for me. I alone, I have the power to transform you, to render you the most adorable of all men; I do not wish then that your spirit should escape from my possession,—it should no more reveal itself to others than your eyes, your charming mouth and your features should speak to them. To me alone belongs the power of illuminating the splendors of your intelligence as I give fire to your glances. Remain that sombre and cold, that surly and disdainful grandee of Spain which you were formerly. You were a savage dominion destroyed, among the ruins of which no one ventured, you were contemplated from a distance, and now you are opening up pleasant roads for all the

world to enter, and you are becoming an amiable Parisian! Do you no longer remember my programme? Your joys revealed a little too plainly that you loved. It required my look to prevent you from making known to the salon the most observing, the most mocking, the wittiest in Paris, that Armande-Louise-Marie de Chaulieu gave to you your spirit. I believe you too great to bring the slightest ruse of politics into your love; but, if you should not have with me the simplicity of a child, I should complain of you; and, notwithstanding this first fault, you are still the object of a profound admiration for

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU.

XXIII

FELIPE TO LOUISE

When God sees our faults, he sees also our repentances: you are quite right, my dear mistress. I felt that I had displeased you without being able to penetrate the cause of your trouble; but you have explained it to me, and you have given me new reasons for adoring you. Your jealousy, after the manner of that of the God of Israel, has filled me with happiness. Nothing is more saintly nor more sacred than jealousy. Oh, my beautiful guardian angel, Jealousy is the sentinel who never sleeps; it is to love what evil is to man, a veracious admonition. Be jealous of your servitor, Louise: the

more you strike him, the more will he kiss, submissive, humble and unhappy, the rod which informs him in striking him how much you are attached to him. But alas! dear, if you have not perceived them, is it then God who will keep an account for me of so many efforts made to vanquish my timidity, to overcome the sentiments which you thought feeble in me? Yes, I took it seriously upon myself to show myself to you as I was before I loved. My conversation formerly gave some pleasure in Madrid, and I wished to let you know for yourself what I was worth. Is it a vanity? you have well punished it. Your last look left me in a trembling such as I have never before experienced, even when I saw the French forces before Cadiz, and my life held in suspense in a hypocritical phrase of my master. I sought for the cause of your displeasure without being able to find it, and I was filled with despair at this want of accord in our souls, for I should act by your will, think by your thoughts, see by your eyes, enjoy in your pleasure and suffer in your pain, as I feel the cold and the heat. For myself, the crime and the anguish lie in this default of simultaneousness in the life of our heart which you have made so beautiful. "Displease her!—" I repeated to myself a thousand times since like a fool. My noble and beautiful Louise, if anything could increase my absolute devotion for you and my unshakable belief in your holy conscience, it would be your doctrine which has entered into my heart like a new light. You have revealed to me my own

feelings, you have explained to me things which were confused in my mind—. Oh! if you think to punish thus, what are then the recompenses? But to have accepted me for servitor suffices for all that I wish. I draw from you an unhoped-for light: I am devoted, my breath is not useless, my strength has its employment, were it only to suffer for you. I have said it to you, I repeat it to you, you will always find me such as I was when I offered myself as a humble and modest servitor! Yes, were you dishonored and lost, as you said you might be, my tenderness would augment with your voluntary unhappiness! I would dry the wounds, I would heal them, I would convince God by my prayers that you were not culpable and that your faults were the crime of others—. Have I not said to you that I bear for you in my heart all those diverse sentiments which should belong to a father, a mother, a sister and a brother? that I am before everything a family for you, everything and nothing, according to your wishes? But is it not you who have imprisoned so many hearts in the heart of a lover? Forgive me then for being from time to time more lover than father and brother, and learn that there is always a brother, a father behind the lover. If you could read in my heart, when I see you beautiful and radiant, serene and admired by all in the corner of your carriage in the Champs-Élysées or in your box in the theatre!—Ah! if you knew how little my pride is personal when I hear the praises which the sight of your beauty compels, by your

carriage, and how much I love the unknown persons who admire you! When by chance you have enriched my soul by a salutation, I am at the same time humble and proud, I go away as if God had blessed me, I return home joyous, and my joy leaves in me a long, luminous trace,—it shines in the wreaths of the smoke of my cigarette, and I know all the more because of it that the blood which boils in my veins is all yours. Do you not then know how much you are loved? After having seen you, I return into the cabinet where glitters all the Saracenic magnificence, but where your portrait eclipses everything else, when I have pressed the spring which renders it invisible to all other eyes; and I then give myself up to the infinitude of this contemplation: I make of it poems of happiness. From the height of the heavens, I can perceive the course of a whole life which I dare to hope. Have you sometimes heard in the silence of the night, or, notwithstanding the noise of the world, a voice sound in your dear little adored ear? Are you ignorant of the thousand prayers which are addressed to you? Through long contemplation of you silently, I have ended by discovering the reason of all your features, their correspondence with the perfection of your soul; I compose to you then, in Spanish, on this accord of your two beautiful natures, sonnets which you do not know, for my poesy is too much below the subject, and I dare not send it to you. My heart is so perfectly absorbed in yours that I do not pass a moment without thinking of you; and, if you

should cease to thus animate my life, it would mean suffering for me. Do you now understand, Louise, what a torment it is for me to be, quite involuntarily, the cause of a displeasure to you and not to be able to guess the reason? This beautiful double life was arrested, and my heart felt a glacial cold. Finally, in the possibility of explaining to myself this want of accord, I thought that I was no longer loved; I returned very sorrowfully, but happy still, to my condition of servitor, when your letter arrived and filled me with joy. Oh! scold me always thus.

A child who had fallen said to its mother: "Forgive me!" in rising and concealing from her its hurt. Yes, forgiveness for having caused her an anxiety. Well, this child, it is I: I have not changed, I deliver to you the key to my character with the submission of a slave; but, dear Louise, I shall make no more false steps. Endeavor to keep the chain which attaches me to you and which you hold, always sufficiently tightened so that a single movement may communicate your least wishes to him who will be always

Your slave,

FELIPE.

XXIV

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO RENÉE DE L'ESTORADE

October, 1825.

My dear friend, you who married yourself in two months to a poor sufferer of whom you made

yourself the mother, you know nothing of the frightful and sudden changes of that drama which is played in the depths of hearts and called love, in which everything becomes tragical in a moment, in which death is in a look, in a response lightly made. I reserved for a last proof of Felipe a terrible but decisive trial. I wished to know if I were loved *quand même!* the great and sublime words of the Royalists, and why not of the Catholics? He walked with me all one night under the linden trees at the end of our garden, and he did not have in his soul even the shadow of a doubt. The next day, I was more loved, and for him still quite as chaste, quite as grand, quite as pure as the night before; he had not taken from it the least advantage. Oh! he is indeed a Spaniard, indeed an Abencerrage. He scaled my wall to kiss the hand which I offered to him in the shadow from the height of my balcony; he risked falling; but how many young people would do as much? All that is nothing, the Christians endure frightful martyrdoms to attain Heaven. Day before yesterday, in the evening, I took to one side the future Ambassador of the King at the Court of Spain, my very honored father, and I said to him smiling:

"Monsieur, for a small number of friends, you will marry to the nephew of an ambassador your dear Armande, to whom this ambassador, desirous of such an alliance and who has begged for it for a sufficient length of time, assures in the marriage contract his immense fortune and his titles after his

death, while giving, at the present moment, to the married couple a hundred thousand francs' income and acknowledging for the bride a dot of eight hundred thousand francs. Your daughter weeps, but she bows under the irresistible ascendency of your majestic paternal authority. Some slanderers assert that your daughter hides under her tears a designing and ambitious soul. We are going this evening to the Opera, in the gentleman's box, and Monsieur le Baron de Macumer will come there."

"He is not going then?" replied my father smiling and addressing me as an ambassadress.

"You take Clarissa Harlowe for Figaro!" I said to him throwing upon him a look full of disdain and of mockery. "When you have seen me with the right hand ungloved you will deny this impertinent story, and you will show that you are offended by it."

"I may be easy concerning your future,—you have no more the head of a young girl than Joan of Arc had a woman's heart. You will be happy, you will love no one and you will allow yourself to be loved!"

This time I burst into laughter.

"What is the matter with you, my little coquette?" he said to me.

"I tremble for the interests of my country—"

And, seeing that he did not understand me, I added:

"At Madrid!"

"You would not believe to what an extent, at the end of a year, this nun makes fun of her father," said he to the duchess.

"Armande makes fun of everything," replied my mother looking at me.

"What do you wish to say?" I asked her.

"Why, you do not even fear the dampness of the night which might give you rheumatism," she said, giving me another look.

"The mornings," I replied, "are so warm!"

The duchess lowered her eyes.

"It is high time to marry her," said my father, "and it will be, I hope, before my departure."

"Yes, if you wish it," I replied to him simply.

Two hours later, my mother and I, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and Madame d'Espard, we were like four roses in the front of the opera box. I had placed myself at the side, presenting only a shoulder to the public and being able to see everything without being seen in that spacious box which occupies one of the two panels of the wall at the end of the auditorium, between the columns. Macumer arrived, planted himself on his legs and put his opera glasses before his eyes so that he might contemplate me at his ease. At the first entr'acte he came in whom I called "the king of the ribalds," a young man of feminine beauty. The Comte Henri de Marsay made his appearance in the box with an epigram in his eyes, a smile on his lips, a joyful air all over his face. He made his compliments first to my mother, then to Madame d'Espard, to the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, to the Comte d'Esgrignon and to Monsieur de Canalis; then he said to me:

"I do not know if I shall be the first to

compliment you on an event which will render you an object of envy."

"Ah, a marriage!" I said. "Is it for a young person who has so recently come out of a convent to instruct you that the marriages which are talked of never take place?"

Monsieur de Marsay leaned over to the ear of Macumer, and I perfectly understood, only through the movement of his lips, that he said to him:

"Baron, you are perhaps in love with that little coquette, who has made use of you; but, as it is a question of marriage and not of a passion, it is always necessary to know what is going on."

Macumer threw upon the officious slanderer one of those looks which, as I say, is a poem, and replied to him something like, "I do not love any little coquette!" with an air which delighted me so that I took off my glove on seeing my father. Felipe had not had the slightest fear nor the slightest suspicion. He had abundantly realized all that I expected of his character,—he had faith only in me, the world and its falsehoods did not reach him. The Abencerrage had not frowned, the color of his blue blood had not tinged his olive face. The two young counts went out. I said then, laughing, to Macumer:

"Monsieur de Marsay has made for you an epigram on me."

"Much more than an epigram," he replied; "an epithalamium."

"You are speaking Greek to me," I said to him

smiling and rewarding him with a certain look which always makes him lose countenance.

"I hope so indeed!" exclaimed my father addressing Madame de Maufrigneuse. "There is some infamous gossip about. As soon as a young girl comes into society, there is a rage to marry her, and all sorts of absurdities are invented! I shall never marry Armande against her will. I am going to take a turn in the foyer, for it will be believed that I am allowing this rumor to circulate so as to suggest this marriage to the ambassador; and the daughter of Cæsar should be even less suspected than his wife, who should not be suspected at all."

The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and Madame d'Espard looked first at my mother, then at the baron, with a sparkling, bantering, crafty air, full of restrained interrogations. These fine adders had ended by suspecting something. Of all the secret things, love is the most public, and women exhale it, I believe. Thus, to conceal it well, a woman should be a monster. Our eyes are even more talkative than our tongues. After having enjoyed the delicious pleasure of finding Felipe as grand as I wished him to be, I naturally desired something more. I accordingly made to him a signal agreed upon to tell him to come to my window by the dangerous road which you know of. Some hours later, I found him straight as a statue, flattened against the side of the wall, his hands supported on the balcony of my window, studying the reflections of the light in my apartment.

"My dear Felipe," I said to him, "you did well this evening,—you conducted yourself as I would have behaved myself if I had heard that you were about to be married."

"I thought that you would have informed me before all the world," he replied.

"And what is your right to this privilege?"

"That of a devoted servitor."

"Are you really one?"

"Yes," said he; "and I shall never change."

"Well, if this marriage were necessary, if I should resign myself—"

The soft light of the moon was as it were lit up by the two glances which he threw first on me, then on the sort of abyss which the wall made between us. Judging from the lightning-like glance which illumined his face and darted from his eyes, he appeared to ask himself if we could die together, crushed, but this sentiment was repressed by a force superior to that of passion.

"The Arab has only one word," he said in a choking voice, "I am your servitor and belong to you: I will live all my life for you."

The hand which held the balcony seemed to me to slacken its grasp, I placed my own on it saying to him:

"Felipe, my friend, I am by my own will your wife from this instant. Go and demand me to-morrow morning from my father. He wishes to keep my fortune; but you will engage yourself to acknowledge it in the contract for me without having

received it, and you will doubtless come to an agreement. I am no longer Armande de Chaulieu; descend promptly, Louise de Macumer does not wish to commit the slightest imprudence."

He turned pale, his legs gave way, he threw himself from a height of about ten feet to the ground without doing himself the least injury; but, after having caused me the most horrible emotion, he saluted me with his hand and disappeared. "I am then beloved," I said to myself, "as a woman never was!" And I fell asleep with a childish satisfaction; my fate was forever fixed. About two o'clock the next day, my father sent for me in his cabinet, where I found the duchess and Macumer. The compliments were graciously exchanged. I replied quite simply that, if Monsieur Hénarez had come to an agreement with my father, I had no reason for opposing their wishes. Thereupon my mother retained the baron for dinner; after which, we all four went for a promenade in the Bois de Boulogne. I looked very mockingly at Monsieur de Marsay when he passed on horseback, for he noticed Macumer and my father on the front seat of the carriage.

My adorable Felipe has changed his card to this:

HÉNAREZ,

DES DUCS DE SORIA, BARON DE MACUMER

Every morning he brings me himself a bouquet of a delicious magnificence, in the midst of which I

find always a letter which contains a Spanish sonnet in my praise written by him during the night.

Not to make this package too heavy, I send you as a specimen the first and the last of these sonnets, which I have translated for you word by word in arranging them for you verse by verse.

FIRST SONNET

More than once, covered with a thin vest of silk, —the sword high without my heart's beating one pulsation the more,—I have waited for the assault of the furious bull—and his horn sharper than the crescent of Phœbe.

I have mounted, humming an Andalusian seguidilla,—the slope of a redoubt under a rain of iron; —I have thrown my life on the green cloth of chance—without thinking more of it than of a quadruple of gold.

I would have taken with my hand the balls from the throat of the cannon;—but I believe that I have become more timid than a hare on the watch, than an infant who sees a spectre in the folds of his window.

For, when thou lookest at me with thy gentle glance,—an icy sweat covers my forehead, my knees give way under me,—I tremble, I recoil, I no longer have any courage.

SECOND SONNET

This night, I wished to sleep that I might dream of thee;—but the jealous slumber fled my eyelids;

—I placed myself on the balcony and I looked at the sky:—when I think of thee, my eyes always turn heavenward.

Strange phenomena, which love alone can explain,—the firmament had lost its color of sapphire:—the stars, diamonds extinguished in their mounting of gold,—launched only dying glances, perishing rays.

The moon, deprived of her adornment of silver and of lily,—rolled sorrowfully on the dull horizon, for thou hast robbed the sky of all its splendors.

The whiteness of the moon shines on thy charming forehead,—all the azure of the sky is concentrated in thy eyeballs, and thy lashes are formed by the rays of the stars.

Could one prove more gracefully to a young girl that one is occupied only with her? What do you say to this love which expresses itself by lavishing the flowers of intelligence and the flowers of the earth? Within the last ten days I have known what it is, this Spanish gallantry so famous formerly.

Ah now! dear, what is going on at La Crampade, where I walk about so often examining the progress of our agriculture? Have you nothing to say to me of our mulberry trees, of our plantations, of last Winter? Is everything succeeding according to your wishes? Have the flowers bloomed out in thy heart of a spouse at the same time as those of our shrubbery? I dare not say of our borders. Does Louis continue his system of madrigals? Do you

understand each other well? The gentle murmur of thy stream of conjugal tenderness, is it worth more than the turbulence of the torrents of my love? My gentle doctor in petticoats, is she vexed? I would not know how to believe it, and I would send Felipe as a courier to place himself at your knees and to bring back to me your head or my forgiveness if it were so. I am leading a beautiful life here, dear love, and I would like to know how is going on that of Provence. We are going to increase our family by a Spaniard the color of a Havana cigar, and I am still waiting for your congratulations.

Truly, my beautiful Renée, I am anxious, I am afraid that you are concealing some suffering so as not to sadden my joys, wicked one! Write me promptly some pages in which you will describe to me your life in its smallest trifles, and tell me truly if you still resist, if your free will is on its two feet, or on its knees, or solidly seated, which would be grave. Do you think that the events of your marriage do not preoccupy me? All which you have written to me makes me sometimes thoughtful. Often, when at the Opera I seem to be looking at the danseuses making pirouettes I say to myself: "It is half-past nine o'clock, she is going to bed perhaps. What is she doing? Is she happy? Is she alone with her free will? or has her free will gone where go the wills that are no longer thought of?—"

A thousand tendernesses.

XXV

RENÉE DE L'ESTORADE TO LOUISE DE CHAULIEU

October.

Impertinent! why should I have written to you? what should I have said to you? During that life animated by fêtes, by the anguishes of love, by its angers and by its flowers which you depict for me, and in which I am interested as in a theatrical piece very well played, I lead a life monotonous and regulated after the manner of the life of a convent. We are always in bed at nine o'clock and up at daybreak. Our repasts are always served with a distracting exactitude. Not the very slightest incident. I have become accustomed to this division of time, and without too much trouble. Perhaps it is natural,—what would life be without this subjection to fixed rules which, according to the astronomers and Louis' assertion, govern the world. Order does not weary. Moreover, I have imposed upon myself certain obligations of the toilet which take my time between rising and the déjeuner,—I intend to appear at it charming, through obedience to my duties as a woman, I experience contentment from it, and I give a very lively one to the good old man and to Louis. We take a walk after the déjeuner. When the newspapers arrive, I disappear to attend to my household affairs or to read, for I read a great deal, or to write to you. I come back an hour before the dinner, and after that we have

cards, we receive visits or we pay them. I pass my days thus between a happy old man, without desires, and a man for whom I am happiness. Louis is so content, that his joy has ended by warming my soul. Happiness, for us, doubtless should not be pleasure. Sometimes, in the evening, when I am not necessary to the party, when I am ensconced in the depths of the sofa, my imagination is sufficiently powerful to enable me to enter into you,—I take up then your beautiful life so fertile, so shaded, so violently agitated, and I ask myself to what you will conduct these turbulent prefaces; will they not kill the book? You can have the illusions of love, you, dear mignonne; but I, I have only the realities of housekeeping. Yes, your loves seem to me like a dream! Thus I had trouble in understanding why you render them so romantic. You wish a man who should have more of soul than of senses, more of grandeur and of virtue than of love; you wish that the dream of young girls at their entry into life should take a bodily form; you demand sacrifices in order to reward them; you submit your Felipe to trials, in order to know if desire, if hope, if curiosity, will be durable. But, child, behind your fantastic decorations rises an altar where is being prepared an eternal bond. The day after the marriage, the terrible fact which changes the young girl into a wife and the lover into a husband can overthrow the elegant scaffoldings of your subtle precautions. Know then, finally, that two lovers, quite as much so as two married persons as were

Louis and I, go to seek under the joys of a wedding, accepting Rabelais's word, a grand *Perhaps!* I do not blame you, although that might be considered a little light-minded, for talking with Don Felipe at the end of the garden, for interrogating him, for passing a night on your balcony, he on the wall; but you play with life, child, and I am afraid that life will play with you. I do not dare to advise you what experience suggests to me for your happiness; but let me repeat to you again from the bottom of my valley, that the viaticum of marriage is in these words,—resignation and devotion! For, I see, notwithstanding all your proofs, notwithstanding your coquetries and your observations, you will marry absolutely as I did. In extending desire, the ditch is dug a little bit deeper, that is all.

Oh! how I should like to see the Baron de Macumer and talk to him for some hours, so much do I desire your happiness!

XXVI

LOUISE DE MACUMER TO RENÉE DE L'ESTORADE

March, 1825.

As Felipe complied, with the generosity of a Saracen, with the plans of my father and my mother, by acknowledging the receipt of my fortune without having received it, the duchess became still more friendly with me than she had been before. She called me a "sly little thing," a "sharp little one," she found that I had a "shrewd tongue."

"But, dear mamma," I said to her the day before the signing of the contract, "you attribute to policy, to craftiness, to skill, what are really the effects of the truest love, the most ingenuous, the most disinterested, the most entire that ever was! I would like you to know that I am not the 'shrewd one' which you do me the honor to take me to be."

"Well then, Armande," she said to me, taking me by the neck, drawing me toward her, kissing me on the forehead, "you did not wish to return to the convent, you did not wish to remain unmarried, and, a grand, a true Chaulieu that you are, you felt the necessity of elevating your father's house"—If you knew, Renée, how much flattery there was in this speech for the duke, who was listening to us—"I have seen you during a whole winter thrusting your little nose into all the quadrilles, sitting in judgment on all the men and taking the measure of the actual world here in France. Thus you were clever enough to discover the only Spaniard who was capable of giving you the fine life of a woman who is mistress in her own household. My dear little one, you have treated him as Tullia treats your brother.

"What a fine school is my sister's convent!" cried my father.

I threw upon my father a look which cut him short in his speech; then I turned towards the duchess again and said to her:

"Madame, I love my intended, Felipe de Soria, with all the powers of my soul. Although this

love was quite involuntary and very much struggled against when it rose in my heart, I swear to you that I only abandoned myself to it from the moment in which I recognized in the Baron de Macumer a soul worthy of my own, a heart in which the delicacies, the generosities, the devotion, the character and the sentiments were conformable to my own."

"But my dear," she resumed, interrupting me, "he is as ugly as—"

"As anything you wish," I said quickly, "but I love his ugliness."

"Come, Armande," said my father to me, "if you love him and if you have had the strength to master your love, you need not risk your happiness. Now, happiness depends a great deal on the first days of marriage—"

"And why not say to her on the first nights?" cried my mother. "Let us alone, monsieur," added the duchess looking at my father.

"You are going to be married in three days, my dear little one," said my mother in my ear; "I should therefore make to you now, without any bourgeois whimperings, the serious recommendation which all mothers make to their daughters. You are going to marry a man whom you love,—thus I have nothing to complain of for you, nor to complain of myself. I have only seen you for the space of a year,—if this has been enough to make me love you, it has not necessarily been long enough for me to melt into tears because of the loss of your company. Your wit has surpassed your

beauty; you have flattered me in my maternal self-love, and you have conducted yourself like a good and affectionate daughter. Thus you will always find me an excellent mother. You smile!—Alas! very frequently, in situations in which the mother and the daughter would have lived together well, the two women fall out. I wish you to be happy. Listen to me then. The love which you feel is a young girl's love, the love natural to all women who are born for the purpose of attaching themselves to a man; but alas! my little one, there is only one man in the world for us, there are not two! and that one whom we should prefer to cherish is not always that one whom we have chosen for a husband, even when believing that we loved him. However singular my words may appear to you, think upon them. If we do not love the one whom we have chosen, the fault of it is in us and in him, sometimes in circumstances for which neither we nor he are responsible; and nevertheless nothing prevents him from being the man to whom our family has given us, the man to whom our heart turns, who should be the man loved. The barriers which later arise between him and us are often owing to a sudden defect of perseverance on our part and that of our husband. To make of her husband her lover is a task as delicate as that of making of her lover her husband, and you have acquitted yourself of yours marvelously. Well, I repeat it to you, I wish to see you happy. Reflect then that from the present time during the first three months of your

marriage you may become unhappy if, on your side, you do not submit to marriage with the obedience, the tenderness and the spirit which you have displayed in your love-making. For, my little sly one, you have allowed yourself to take all the innocent happinesses of a clandestine love. If happy love should commence for you by disenchantments, by displeasures, by sorrows even, well then, come and see me. Do not hope too much at first of marriage, it will give you perhaps more pains than joys. Your happiness will require as much careful culture as love requires. Finally, if by chance you should lose the lover, you may find in his place the father of your children. There, my dear child, is the whole of social life. Sacrifice everything to the man whose name is yours, whose honor, whose consideration, cannot receive the slightest disparagement without its causing to you the most frightful injury. To sacrifice everything to her husband is not only an absolute duty for the women of our rank, it is still more, the most politic conduct. The very finest attribute of the great principles of morality, is to be true and beneficial, from whichever side they are studied. Well, this is enough for you. At present, I think you are inclined to jealousy; and I, my dear, I am jealous also!—but I would not have you stupidly jealous. Listen,—jealousy which shows itself is like that policy which plays with its cards on the table. To show yourself jealous, to let it be seen, is not that to show your own play? We shall then know nothing

of the play of our adversary. In every case, we should know how to suffer in silence. I will have, moreover, a serious interview with Macumer concerning you the day before your marriage."

I took my mother's beautiful arm and kissed her hand, dropping upon it a tear which the accent of her voice had drawn from my eyes. I had recognized in this high morality, worthy of herself and of me, the most profound wisdom, a tenderness without social bigotry, and above all a true estimate of my character. In these simple words, she had put the summing up of the instruction which her life and her experience had perhaps sold to her dearly. She was touched and said to me looking at me:

"Dear little girl, you are entering on a terrible passage. And the greater number of women, ignorant or undeceived, are capable of imitating the Count of Westmoreland!"

We commenced to laugh. To explain to you this pleasantry, I must say to you that at the table, the day before, a Russian princess had related to us the story of the Count of Westmoreland who, having suffered dreadfully from sea-sickness during the passage of the Channel and intending to go to Italy, turned round and went home when he heard of the passage of the Alps,—"I have had enough of passages like that!" said he. You understand Renée, that your sombre philosophy and my mother's lecture were of a nature to re-awaken the fears which agitated us at Blois. The nearer the marriage approached, the more I gathered up within me my

strength, my will, my sentiments to enable me to make the terrible passage from the state of a young girl to the state of a wife. All our conversations returned to my mind, I re-read your letters, and I discovered in them I know not what hidden melancholy. These apprehensions have had the merit of making me appear just like the commonplace fiancée of popular engravings and of the public. Thus the world found me charming and very much as I should be the day of the signing of the contract. This morning, at the Mayor's office, where we went without ceremony, there were only the witnesses. I am finishing this scrap of letter while they are getting ready my toilet for the dinner. We will be married at the church of Sainte-Valère, this evening at midnight, after a brilliant soirée. I admit that my fears give me the air of a victim and a false modesty which secure for me admirations which I do not in the least understand. I am delighted to see my poor Felipe quite as much of a young girl as I am; the world hurts him, he is like a bat in a glass box.

"Happily this day has a to-morrow!" he said to me in my ear without meaning any malice.

He would not wish to see anyone, so timid and shamefaced is he. When he came to sign our contract, the Ambassador of Sardinia took me aside to offer me a necklace of pearls attached by six magnificent diamonds. It is the gift of my sister-in-law, the Duchesse de Soria. This necklace is accompanied by a bracelet of sapphires under which

is engraved: *I love you without knowing you.* Two charming letters enclosed these gifts, which I did not wish to accept without knowing if Felipe would permit me.

"For," I said to him, "I would only wish you to see that which came from me."

He kissed my hand, much moved, and replied to me:

"Wear them because of the inscription, and of these tokens of tenderness which are sincere—"

Saturday evening.

Here then, my poor Renée, are the last lines of a young girl. After the midnight mass, we will set out for an estate which Felipe, with a delicate attention, has purchased in Nivernais, on the road to Provence. I call myself already Louise de Macumer, but I leave Paris in a few hours as Louise de Chaulieu. In whatever fashion I call myself, there will never be anything for you but

LOUISE.

XXVII

THE SAME TO THE SAME

October, 1825.

I have written you nothing more, dear, since the civil marriage, and here it will be soon eight months. As for you, not a word! This is horrible, madame.

Well, we then departed in post carriages for the Château de Chantepleurs, the estate bought by Macumer in Nivernais, on the banks of the Loire, sixty leagues from Paris. Our servants, with the exception of my femme de chambre, were already there, waiting for us, and we arrived there with great promptness the evening of the next day. I slept from Paris to beyond Montargis. The only license which my lord and master had taken had been to support me by the waist, holding my head on his shoulder, on which he had disposed several handkerchiefs. This almost maternal attention which caused him to overcome slumber gave me an indescribable emotion. Put to sleep under the fire of his black eyes, I awakened under their flame,—the same ardor, the same love; but thousands of thoughts had passed that way! He had kissed me twice on the forehead.

We breakfasted in our carriage at Briare. The evening of the next day, at half-past seven, after having talked as I used to talk with you at Blois, admiring that Loire which we used to admire, we entered the long and handsome avenue of linden trees, of acacias, of sycamores and of larch trees, which conducts to Chantepleurs. At eight o'clock we dined; at ten o'clock, we were in a charming Gothic chamber embellished with all the inventions of modern luxury. My Felipe, whom all the world thinks ugly, seemed to me very beautiful, beautiful with goodness, with grace, with tenderness, with exquisite delicacy. Of the desires of love, I did

not see the slightest trace. During the journey, he had conducted himself as though he were a friend whom I had known for fifteen years. He had painted for me, as he knows how to paint—he always expresses his first thoughts—the frightful storms which had raged within him and the traces of which had disappeared from his countenance.

"Up to the present, there is nothing very frightful in marriage," I said going to the window and looking out in the superb moonlight over a delightful park from which rose penetrating odors.

He came close to me, took me round the waist again and said to me:

"And why be frightened? Have I belied by a gesture, by a look, my promises? Shall I belie them some day?"

Never had a voice, never had a look, such a power: the voice thrilled me through all the finest fibres of my body and stirred all the feelings; the look had a strength like the sun's.

"Oh!" I said to him, "how much of Moorish perfidy is there not in your perpetual slavery!"

My dear, he understood me.

Therefore, beautiful lamb, if I have not written to you for some months, you will now understand why. I am compelled to recall to myself the strange past of the young girl in order to explain to you the wife. Renée, I understand you to-day. It is neither to an intimate friend, nor to her mother, nor perhaps to herself, that the happy young bride can speak of her happy marriage. We must leave

this memory in our souls as one sentiment the more which belongs to us in ourselves and for which there is no name. How! the graceful follies of the heart and the irresistible drawing of desire have been called a duty. And why? What horrible power has then conceived the idea of obliging us to trample under our feet the delicacies of taste, the thousand modesties of the woman, by converting these delights into a duty. How can one owe these flowers of the soul, these roses of life, these poems of exalted sensibility, to a being whom one does not love? Rights in such sensations as these! but they are born and they expand in the sunshine of love, or their germs are destroyed under the coldness of repugnance and aversion. It is for love alone to entertain such enchantments! Oh, my sublime Renée, now I know that you are very great! I bow the knee before you, I am astonished at your depth and at your perspicacity. Yes, the woman who has not, as I have, made a secret marriage of love concealed under the legal and public wedding ceremonies should throw herself into maternity as a soul for whom the world fails should throw itself into Heaven! From all that which you have written to me there is deduced a cruel principle,—it is only the superior men who know how to love. To-day I know why. Man obeys two principles. There are to be met with in him need and feeling. The inferior or feeble beings take the need for the feeling; while the superior souls cover up the need under the admirable appearances of the feeling:

feeling communicates to them by its violence an excessive reserve, and inspires them to the admiration of the woman. Evidently the sensibility is in proportion to the power of the interior organization, and the man of genius is therefore the only one who can approach our delicacy,—he hears, divines, comprehends the woman; he lifts himself on the wings of his desire restrained by the timidities of feeling. Thus when the intelligence, the heart and the senses, all equally intoxicated, carry us away, is it not again on the earth that we fall; one is lifted into the celestial spheres, and unfortunately one does not remain there long enough. Such is, my dear soul, the philosophy of the first three months of my marriage. Felipe is an angel. I can think aloud with him. Without any rhetorical figure, he is another myself. His grandeur is inexplicable: he attaches himself still more strongly by possession, and discovers in happiness new reasons for loving. I am for him the finest part of himself. I see it,—the years of marriage, far from altering the object of his delights, will augment his confidence, will develop new sensibilities and will strengthen our union. What a happy delirium! My soul is so constituted that pleasures leave in me strong lights, they impart to me a glow, they renew themselves in my interior being: the interval which separates them is like the short night of the long day. The sun which has gilded their summits at its setting finds them still almost warm at his rising. By what happy chance was this so promptly provided

for me? My mother had awakened in me a thousand fears; her forebodings, which seemed to me full of jealousy, although without the slightest bourgeois littleness, have been deceived by the result, for your fears and hers, mine, all have been dissipated! We remained at Chantepleurs seven months and a half, like two lovers, one of whom has carried off the other, and who have fled from angry parents. The roses of pleasure have crowned our love, they deck our double life. Through a sudden return to my former self, one morning when I was more fully happy, I thought of my Renée and of her marriage of convenience, and I divined your life, I have penetrated it! Oh my angel, why do we speak a different language? Your marriage purely social and my marriage which is only a happy love are two worlds which can no more comprehend each other than the finite can comprehend the infinite. You remain on the earth, I am in heaven! You are in the human sphere, and I am in the divine sphere. I reign by love, you reign by design and by duty. I am so high, that, if there should be a fall, I should be broken into a thousand crumbs. In short I should keep silent, for I am ashamed to depict to you the splendor, the richness, the glittering joys of such a springtime of love.

We have been at Paris for the last ten days, in the charming hotel, in the Rue du Bac, constructed by the architect to whom Felipe has given a commission to alter Chantepleurs. I have just heard, with my soul expanded by the permitted pleasures

of a happy marriage, the celestial music of Rossini which I had heard with my soul disquieted, tormented unknown to myself by the curiosities of love. I am generally considered to be looking better, and I am like a child when I hear myself called *madame*.

Friday morning.

Renée, my beautiful saint, my happiness brings me back ceaselessly to you. I feel myself better for you than I have ever been; I am so devoted to you! I have so profoundly studied your conjugal life by the commencement of mine, and I see you so grand, so noble, so magnificently virtuous, that I constitute myself here your inferior, your sincere admirer at the same time as your friend. In seeing what my marriage is, it is nearly proven to me that I should have died if it had been otherwise. And you live? by what sentiment, tell it to me? But I will not permit myself the slightest pleasantry at your expense. Alas! pleasantry, my angel, is the daughter of ignorance: we mock at that of which we know nothing. "Where the recruits commence to laugh, the old soldiers are grave," said to me the Comte de Chaulieu, a poor captain of cavalry who has not yet been farther than from Paris to Fontainebleau and from Fontainebleau to Paris. Thus, my dear beloved, I see clearly that you have not told me all. Yes, you have hidden from me some wounds. You suffer, I feel it. I have made for myself apropos of you certain romances of ideas

while wishing at a distance, and through the little which you have said to me of yourself, to discover the reasons of your conduct. She has only tried marriage, I thought one evening, and that which is happiness for me has only been suffering for her. She has had of it only her sacrifices, and wishes to limit their number. She has disguised her griefs under the pompous axioms of social morality. Ah, Renée, there is in this something admirable, a pleasure has no need of religion, of display, nor of great words, it is everything for itself; whilst, to justify the atrocious combination of our slavery and of our vassalage, men have accumulated theories and maxims. If your immolations are beautiful, are sublime, my happiness, sheltered under the white and gold canopy of the church and signed and witnessed by the dullest of mayors, must be then a monstrosity! For the honor of the laws, for you, but above all to render my own pleasures complete, I would wish you to be happy, my Renée. Oh! tell me that you feel coming into your heart a little love for that Louis who adores you? Tell me that the symbolic and solemn torch of Hymen has not served you only to light up shadows? for love, my angel, is quite exactly for the moral nature what the sun is for the earth. I am always coming back to speak to you of that light which enlightens me and which, as I fear, will consume me. Dear Renée, you who used to say in your ecstasies of friendship, under the vine arbor at the back of the convent, "I love you so much, Louise, that, if God should

manifest himself, I would ask of him all the pain and for you all the joys of life. Yes, I have the passion of suffering!" Well my dear, to-day I do the same for you, and demand of God with great cries that we should share my pleasures between us.

Listen: I have guessed that you have become ambitious yourself under the name of Louis de l'Estorade; well, at the coming election, have him named deputy, for he will be nearly forty, and as the Chamber will not assemble till six months after the election, he will find himself precisely at the age required for a man to enter political life. You will come to Paris, I say only that to you. My father and the friends whom I am making for myself will appreciate you, and if your old father-in-law will secure a majorat we will obtain the title of count for Louis. It will be that already! Finally we shall be together.

XXVIII

RENÉE DE L'ESTORADE TO LOUISE DE MACUMER

December, 1825.

My very happy Louise, you have bedazzled me. I have been holding for some moments your letter on which some of my tears shone in the light of the setting sun, my arms weary, alone under a little arid rock at the base of which I have caused a bench to be put. In the distance, like a steel blade,

shines the Mediterranean. Some odoriferous trees shade this bench where I have caused to be transplanted an enormous jasmine, honeysuckles and some Spanish genistas. Some day the rock will be entirely covered with climbing plants. There is already much of the creeper that was planted here. But winter has come and all this verdure has become like an old tapestry. When I am here, no one comes to trouble me, it is known that I wish to be alone. This bench is called Louise's bench. Does not that say to you that I am not alone, although alone?

If I relate to you these details, so slight for you, if I depict for you this verdant hope which, in anticipation, clothes this bare and frowning rock, on the top of which the chance of vegetation has placed one of the very finest umbelliferous pines, it is that I have found here images to which I am attached.

In enjoying your happy marriage—and why should I not avow to you all?—in envying it with all my strength, I felt the first movement of my child who from the depths of my life has reacted on the depths of my soul. This dumb sensation, at once a notice, a pleasure, a sorrow, a promise, a reality; this happiness which is mine only in the world and which remains a secret between God and myself; this mystery has said to me that the rock will be one day covered with flowers, that the joyous laughter of a family will re-echo from it, that my entrails are finally blessed and will give life to multitudes. I felt that I was born to be a mother! Therefore the first certainty which I have had of carrying

within me another life has given me beneficent consolations. An immense joy has crowned all these long days of devotion which have already made the joy of Louis.

Devotion! I said to myself, art thou not more than love? art thou not the most profound delight, because thou art an abstract delight, the generating delight? Art thou not, O Devotion, the quality which is superior to the effect produced? art thou not the mysterious indefatigable divinity hidden under the innumerable spheres in an unknown centre by which all the worlds pass alternately? Devotion, alone in its secret, full of pleasures tasted in silence on which no profane eye is cast and which no one suspects, Devotion, a jealous and overwhelming God, a God vanquishing and strong, inexhaustible because it has relations with the very nature of things and that it is thus always equal to itself, notwithstanding the distribution of its forces, Devotion, this is then the seal of my life!

Love, Louise, is an effort of Felipe on yourself; but the radiation of my life upon the family will produce an incessant reaction of this little world on myself! Your pretty golden harvest is transient; but mine, for being delayed, will it not be all the more durable? It will renew itself from moment to moment. Love is the prettiest larceny which Society has been able to perpetrate on Nature; but maternity, is not that Nature in her joy? A smile has dried my tears. Love has rendered my Louis happy; but marriage has made me mother and I wish to be

happy also! Then I came back with slow steps to my white country house with green blinds to write you this.

Then, dear, the fact the most natural and the most surprising that we can have has been established within me for the last five months; but I can confide it to you that it does not trouble in any way, either my heart or my intelligence. I see them all happy —the future grandfather encroaches upon the rights of his grandson, he has become like an infant; the father assumes grave and unquiet airs; they are all full of little cares for me, all speaking of the happiness of being mother. Alas! I alone feel nothing, and do not dare to tell of the state of perfect insensibility in which I am. I lie a little not to sadden their joy. As it is permitted to me to be frank with you, I avow to you that, in the crisis in which I find myself, maternity only commences in imagination. Louis was as much surprised as I myself to learn of my pregnancy. Is this not to say to you that this infant has come of his own accord, without having been summoned otherwise than by the impatiently expressed wishes of his father? Chance, my dear, is the god of maternity. Although, according to our physician, these hazards are in harmony with the will of nature, he has not denied to me that the children which are called so gracefully "love children" should be handsome and clever; that their life is often as it were protected by the happiness which had radiated, brilliant star! at their conception. Perhaps then, my Louise, you

will have in your maternity joys of which I should be ignorant in mine. Perhaps it will be better loved, the child of a man adored as you adore Felipe, than that of a husband whom one has married through reason, to whom one has given one's self through duty, and, in short, merely to be a wife! These thoughts, guarded in the bottom of my heart, add to my gravity of mother in hope. But, as there is no family life without a child, my desire would be to hasten the moment in which will commence for me the pleasures of a family, which should be my sole existence. At this moment, my life is a life of waiting and of mysteries, in which the most nauseating suffering doubtless accustoms the woman to other sufferings. I watch myself. Notwithstanding the efforts of Louis, whose love envelops me in cares, gentlenesses, in tendernesses, I have vague anxieties with which are mingled the disgusts, the troubles, the singular appetites of pregnancy. If I must relate to you things as they are, at the risk of causing you some aversion to the occupation, I avow to you that I cannot understand the whim which I have taken for certain oranges, a grotesque taste and one which I find quite natural. My husband goes to seek for me in Marseilles the finest oranges in the world; he orders them from Malta, from Portugal, from Corsica; but with these oranges I will have nothing to do. I hasten to Marseilles sometimes on foot, to devour there bad oranges at a liard apiece, almost rotten, in a little street which descends to the port, at two steps from the Hôtel de

Ville; and their bluish or greenish mouldiness glitters in my eyes like diamonds,—I see in it flowers as it were, I have no consciousness of their cadaverous odor and find in them an irritating savor, a vinous warmth, delicious taste. Well, my angel, here you have the first amorous sensations of my life. These frightful oranges are my loves. You do not desire Felipe as much as I wish for one of these half-rotten fruits. In short, I steal out sometimes furtively, I gallop to Marseilles with a light foot, and I am seized with voluptuous shiverings when I approach the street,—I fear that the merchant may have no more rotten oranges, I throw myself upon them, I eat them, I devour them in the open street. It seems to me that these fruits come from Paradise and contain the most delicious nourishment. I have seen Louis turn his head not to smell their bad odor. I remember that atrocious phrase of Obermann, sombre elegy which I repent having read: "The roots nourish themselves in a fetid water!" Since I have been eating these fruits, I have had no more heart troubles and my health has become re-established. These depravations have a reason, since they are a natural effect and since half the women experience these desires, monstrous sometimes. When my pregnancy becomes very visible, I will no longer go outside of La Crampade,—I should not like to be seen in that condition.

I am excessively curious to know at what moment of the life maternity commences. I very much fear

that it will only be in the midst of frightful suffering.

Adieu, my happy one! adieu, you in whom I am born again and by whom I picture to myself these beautiful loves, these jealousies because of a look, these words whispered in the ear and these pleasures which envelop us like another atmosphere, another blood, another light, another life! Ah, mignonne, I also, I comprehend love. Do not cease to tell me everything. Let us keep to our convention. For myself, I will spare you nothing. Thus I will say to you, to finish this letter gravely, that in re-reading it a profound and invincible terror has seized me. It seemed to me that this splendid love defied God. The sovereign master of the world, Misfortune, will he not be angry not to have his part in your festival? What superb fortunes has he not overthrown! Ah Louise, do not forget, in the midst of your happiness, to pray to God. Do good, be charitable and benevolent; in short conjure the adversities by your modesty. For myself, I have become still more pious since my marriage than I was at the convent. You do not say anything to me of religion in Paris. In adoring Felipe, it seems to me that you address yourself, contrary to the proverb, more to the saint than to God. But my terror is excessive friendship. You go together to the church, and you practise your charities in secret, do you not? You will find me perhaps very provincial in this end of the letter; but think that my fears conceal an excessive friendship, friendship as La Fontaine

understood it, that which disquiets itself and alarms itself at a dream, at a shadowy idea. You deserve to be happy, because you think of me in your happiness, as I think of you in my monotonous life, somewhat grave but full, sober but productive: be then blessed!

XXIX

MONSIEUR DE L'ESTORADE TO THE BARONNE DE MACUMER

December, 1825.

My wife has not wished that you should learn through the common formal notification of an event which fills us with joy. She has just been delivered of a fine boy, and we are postponing his baptism until you shall return to your estate at Chantepleurs. We hope, Renée and I, that you will come as far as La Crampade and that you will be the godmother of our firstborn. In this hope, I have inscribed him on the civil registers under the names of Armand-Louis de l'Estorade. Our dear Renée suffered very much, but with an angelic patience. As you know, she has been sustained in this first trial of a mother's estate by the certainty of the happiness which she gave to us all. Without yielding to the somewhat ridiculous exaggerations of the fathers who are fathers for the first time, I can assure you that the little Armand is very handsome; but you will readily believe it when I tell

you that he has the features and the eyes of Renée. That is to have had wit already. Now that the physician and the *accoucheur* have assured us that Renée has not the least danger to run, for she nurses, the infant has taken the breast very well, the milk is abundant, the nature is so rich in her! we can, my father and I, abandon ourselves to our joy. Madame, this joy is so great, so strong, so full, it animates so much the whole household, it has changed so much the existence of my dear wife, that I desire for your happiness that it will be thus very soon for you. Renée has caused to be prepared an apartment which I should wish to render worthy of our guest, but in which you will be received at least with a fraternal cordiality, if not with luxury.

Renée has communicated to me, madame, your intentions concerning us, and I embrace all the more this occasion to thank you in that nothing is more seasonable. The birth of my son has determined my father to make some sacrifices to which the old men bring themselves with difficulty,—he has acquired two domains. La Crampade is now an estate which brings in thirty thousand francs. My father is going to solicit from the king the permission to erect it into an entailed estate; but obtain for him the title of which you spoke in your last letter, and you will already have done something for your godson.

As for myself, I will follow your counsel solely that you may be reunited to Renée during the

Sessions. I am studying with ardor and endeavoring to become what is called a special man. But nothing will give me more courage than to know you the protectress of my little Armand. Promise us then to come to play here, you so beautiful and so gracious, so grand and so spiritual, the rôle of a fairy for my eldest son. You will have thus, madame, augmented with an eternal gratitude the sentiments of respectful affection with which I have the honor to be

Your very humble and very obedient servant,

LOUIS DE L'ESTORADE.

XXX

LOUISE DE MACUMER TO RENÉE DE L'ESTORADE

January, 1826.

Macumer has just awakened me with your husband's letter, my angel. I commence by saying *yes*. We will go toward the end of April to Chantepleurs. It will be for me pleasure upon pleasure to travel, to see you and to be the godmother of your first child; but I wish to have Macumer for godfather. A Catholic alliance with another sponsor would be odious to me. Ah! if you could have seen the expression on his face at the moment when I said this to him, you would have known how much this angel loves me.

"I wish all the more that we should go together to La Crampade, Felipe," I said to him "that there we,

perhaps, may have a child. I also, I wish to be a mother,—although however I should be well divided between a child and you. In the first place, if I should see you preferring some creature to me, were it my son, I do not know what would happen. Medea was pretty nearly right: there was some wisdom among the ancients!"

He commenced to laugh. Thus, dear lamb, you have the fruit without having had the flowers, and I, I have the flowers without the fruit. The contrast of our destinies continues. We are sufficiently philosophical to endeavor to find some day the significance and the moral of it. Bah! I have only been married ten months, you must admit, there has not been any time lost.

We lead the dissipated and yet busy life, of happy people. The days seem to us always too short. The world, which has seen me again disguised as a wife, has found the Baronne de Macumer much prettier than Louise de Chaulieu: happy love has its own embellishments. When, in the fine sunlight and the beautiful January frost, when the trees of the Champs-Élysées are flowery with bunches of white stars, we pass, Felipe and I, in our coupé before all Paris, reunited there where we were separated last year, there come to me thoughts by thousands, I am afraid of being a little too insolent, as you foresaw in your last letter.

If I am ignorant of the joys of maternity, you will tell them to me, and I shall be mother through you; but there is, according to my opinion, nothing

comparable to the delights of love. You will find me very ridiculous, but within ten times in ten months I have surprised myself by wishing to die at thirty, in all the splendor of life, in the roses of love, in the midst of delights, to go away satiated, without any deduction, having lived in the sun, fully in the ether, and even a little wearied by love, having lost nothing of my crown, not even a leaf, and keeping all my illusions. Think then what it is to have a young heart in an old body, to find the faces silent, cold, there where all the world, even the indifferent, smiled on us, to be in short merely a respectable woman—. But it is an anticipated hell.

We have had, Felipe and I, our first quarrel on this subject. I desired that he should have the strength to kill me when I had reached thirty, during my sleep, without any warning, so that I should pass from one dream into another. The monster did not wish to do it. I threatened to leave him alone in the world, and he turned pale, the poor child! This great minister has become, my dear, a perfect baby. It is incredible all that he conceals of youthfulness and simplicity. Now that I think aloud with him as with you, that I have brought him to this régime of confidence, we astonish each other.

My dear, the two lovers, Felipe and Louise, wish to send a present to the young mother. We would wish to give you something which would please you. Therefore, tell me frankly what you would like to have, for we do not give surprises after the

manner of the bourgeois. We wish, then, to recall ourselves constantly to your memory by some friendly souvenir, by a thing which will be of use to you every day, and will not wear out in the usage. Our gayest repast, the most intimate, the most animated, for we are then alone, is for us the déjeuner; I have then thought of sending you a special service called *déjeuner,* the ornaments of which shall be children. If you approve of this, answer me promptly. To bring it to you it will be necessary to order it, and the artists of Paris are like the Sluggard Kings. This will be my offering to Lucina.

Farewell, dear nurse, I wish you all the pleasures of mothers, and I am waiting with impatience for the first letter in which you will certainly tell me all, will you not? That *accoucheur* made me shiver. That word in your husband's letter leaped, not at my eyes, but at my heart. Poor Renée, a child costs dear, does it not? I will tell it how much it should love you, this godson. A thousand tendernesses, my angel.

XXXI

RENÉE DE L'ESTORADE TO LOUISE DE MACUMER

Here it will soon be five months since my baby was born, and I have not found, my dear soul, one solitary little moment in which to write to you. When you are a mother, you will excuse me more

completely than you have done, for you have punished me a little by making your letters more rare. Write to me, my dear mignonne! Tell me all your pleasures, paint your happiness for me in full colors, put in all the azure hues without fear of afflicting me, for I am happy and more happy than you will ever imagine.

I have been to the parish church to hear a mass for my churching, in great state, as is the custom in our old families of Provence. The two grandfathers, the father of Louis and mine, gave me their arms. Ah! never have I knelt before God in such overwhelming gratitude. I have so many things to say to you, so many sentiments to depict to you, that I do not know where to commence; but, amidst all this confusion, there rises a radiant memory, that of my prayer in the church!

When, in that place where, as a young girl, I doubted concerning my life and my future, I found myself again transformed into a happy mother, I thought I saw the Virgin of the altar inclining her head and showing to me the Divine Infant who seemed to smile upon me! With what holy effusion of celestial love did I present our little Armand for the benediction of the Curé, who sprinkled him while waiting for the baptism. But you shall see us together, Armand and I.

My child,—you see that I call you my child! but this is in truth the sweetest word that there is in the heart, in the intelligence, and on the lips when one is a mother:—well then, my dear child, I

dragged myself, during the last two months, languidly enough through our gardens, fatigued, overcome by the weariness of this burden which I did not know to be so dear and so sweet notwithstanding all the trials of those two months. I had such apprehensions, forebodings so deathly sinister that my curiosity was not stronger: I reasoned with myself, I said to myself that nothing which nature ordained is to be feared, I promised myself that I would be a mother. Alas! my heart was not touched at all, even while thinking of this infant who gave me sufficient pretty kicks with his feet; and, my dear, one may like to receive these kicks when one has had children before; but for the first time these struggles of an unknown life bring more astonishment than pleasure. I speak to you of myself, who am neither false nor theatrical, and of whom the fruit comes rather from God, for it is God who gives the children, than from a man beloved. Let us leave these past sorrows which will never return again I believe.

When the crisis came, I assembled in myself the elements for such a resistance, I was expecting such agonies, that I supported marvelously, they say, this horrible torture. There was, my mignonne, about an hour during which I abandoned myself to an annihilation the effects of which were those of a dream. I felt myself to be double,—an envelope torn with pincers, rent, tortured; and a placid soul. In this curious state, suffering flowered like a crown over my head. It seemed to me that an immense

rose issued from my skull, enlarged and enveloped me. The red color of this bloody-seeming flower was in the air. I saw everything red. Thus arrived at the point where the separation seemed about to take place between the soul and the body, a pain, which made me think that death was immediate, tore me. I uttered horrible cries, and I found new strength against new pains. This frightful concert of clamors was suddenly overcome in me by the delicious strains of the silvery first cries of this little being. No, nothing can paint this moment for you: it seemed to me that the whole world cried with me, that everything was agony or clamor, and that everything was, as it were, extinguished by this feeble cry of the child. I was put back in my big bed, into which I entered as into a paradise, although I was of an excessive feebleness. Three or four joyful faces, with tearful eyes, then showed me the baby. My dear, I cried in affright:

"What a little monkey!" I said. "Are you sure that it is a child?" I asked.

I turned over on my side, sufficiently overwhelmed not to feel myself any more of a mother than that.

"Do not torment yourself, my dear," said to me my mother, who had constituted herself my nurse, "you have made the prettiest baby in the world. Do not trouble your imagination, it is best for you to devote all your attention to becoming stupid, to do exactly like the cow who grazes that she may have milk."

I accordingly went to sleep with the firm intention of letting myself go in the way of nature. Ah, my angel, the awakening from all these pains, from these confused sensations, from these first days in which everything was obscure, painful and undecided, was divine. These shadows were animated by a sensation, the delights of which surpassed those of the first cry of my child. My heart, my soul, my being, an unknown I, was awakened in its shell, gray and suffering up to this time, as a flower bursts forth from its seed at the brilliant summons of the sun. The little monster took my breast and sucked: here was the *Fiat lux!* I suddenly became mother. This is the happiness, the joy, the ineffable joy, although it is not without some pains. O my beautiful jealous one, how much you will appreciate a pleasure which is only between us, the infant and God. This little being knows absolutely nothing but our breast. There is for him only this one brilliant point in the world, he loves it with all his strength, he thinks only of this fountain of life, he comes to it and goes away to sleep, he awakens to return to it. His lips have an inexpressible love, and, when they fasten to it, they communicate to it at once a pain and a pleasure, a pleasure which goes as far as pain, or a pain which ends by a pleasure; I would not know how to explain to you a sensation which from the breast radiates through me to the very sources of life, for it seems as though this were a centre from which issue a thousand rays which rejoice the heart and the

soul. To give birth, that is nothing; but to nurse, that is to give birth at every hour. Oh! Louise, there are no lover's caresses which can equal those of these little pink hands which wander about so softly, and seek to take hold of life. What looks a child throws alternately from our breast to our eyes! What dreams one has in seeing him suspended by his lips to his treasure! He appeals not less to all the forces of the mind than to all those of the body, he employs both the blood and the intelligence, he satisfies beyond all desires. This adorable sensation of his first cry, which was for me that which the first ray of the sun was for the earth, I found it again in feeling my milk fill his mouth; I experienced it again in receiving his first look, I have just experienced it again in appreciating in his first smile his first thought. He laughed, my dear. This laugh, this look, this biting, this cry, these four enjoyments are infinite: they go all the way to the bottom of the heart, they touch there chords which they alone can touch! The worlds should attach themselves to God as an infant attaches himself to all the fibres of his mother: God, he is the great heart of a mother. There is nothing visible, nor perceptible in conception, nor even in pregnancy; but to nurse, my Louise, it is a happiness at every moment. One sees what becomes of the milk, it makes flesh, it flowers at the end of those delicate fingers which resemble flowers and which have the delicacy of them; it enlarges in fine and transparent nails, it spins itself into hair, it

agitates itself with the feet. Oh! the feet of a baby, why, they are a complete language. The infant commences to express himself with them. To nurse, Louise! it is a transformation which one follows from hour to hour and with a dazed eye. The cries, you do not hear them with the ears, but by the heart; the smiles of the eyes and of the lips, or the agitations of the feet, you understand them as if God wrote for you the characters in letters of fire in space! There is no longer anything in the world which interests you,—the father?—he would be killed if he proposed to awaken the baby. One is, one's self, the entire world for this infant, as the infant is the world for us! One is so certain that one's life is shared, one is so amply recompensed for the pains which one gives one's self and for the sufferings which one endures, for there are sufferings—God forbid that you should have a crack in the breast! this wound which opens under the rosy lips, which is cured with so much difficulty and which causes torture sufficient to drive you crazy, if it were not for the joy of seeing the mouth of the infant smeared with milk, is one of the most frightful punishments of beauty. My Louise, think of it, this only happens to a fine and delicate skin.

My young monkey has become, in five months, the prettiest creature that ever a mother bathed with her happy tears, washed, brushed, combed, decked out; for God knows with what an indefatigable ardor these little flowers are decked out, clothed, brushed, washed, changed, kissed! Well then, my

monkey is no longer a monkey, but a *baby,* as my English nurse says, a pink and white *baby;* and, as he feels himself loved, he does not cry too much; but, in truth, I scarcely ever leave him and I endeavor to penetrate him with my soul.

Dear, I have now in my heart for Louis a sentiment which is not love, but one which should in a loving woman, complete love. I do not know if this tenderness, if this recognition disengaged from all interest, does not go beyond love. From all that you have said to me concerning it, love has something in it frightfully terrestrial, whilst there is an ineffable, religious and divine emotion in the affection which a happy mother bears to him from whom proceed these long, these eternal joys. The joy of a mother is a light which is thrown even on the future and lightens it up, but which is reflected on the past to give it the charm of souvenirs.

The old L'Estorade and his son have, moreover, redoubled their goodness to me, I am like a new person for them,—their words, their looks, go to my soul, for they fête me anew every time they see me and speak to me. The old grandfather has become a child, I think; he looks at me with admiration. The first time that I came down to déjeuner and that he saw me eating and nursing his grandson he wept. That tear in those dry eyes in which there scarcely ever gleam any other thoughts than those of money caused to me an inexpressible solace; it seemed to me that the good man comprehended my joys. As to Louis, he would have told

to the trees and to the pebbles of the highroad that he had a son. He passes entire hours in looking at your sleeping godson.—He does not know, he says, when he will become accustomed to it. These excessive demonstrations of joy have revealed to me the extent of their apprehensions and of their fears. Louis has ended by avowing to me that he doubted himself, and believed himself condemned to never have any children. My poor Louis has suddenly changed for the better, he studies more than in the past. This infant has doubled the ambition of the father. As for myself, my dear soul, I am from moment to moment more happy. Each hour brings a new bond between a mother and her infant. That which I feel within me proves that this sentiment is imperishable, natural, for every moment; whilst I suspect love, for example, to have its intermittences. One does not love in the same manner at every moment, there is not embroidered upon this stuff of life flowers that are always brilliant, in short, love can and should cease; but maternity has no decline to fear, it grows with the needs of the infant, it develops itself with him. Is it not at the same time a passion, a need, a sentiment, a duty, a necessity, happiness? Yes, mignonne, this is the peculiar life of woman. Our yearning for devotion is here satisfied, and we do not find the troubles of jealousy. Thus perhaps is it for us the only point in which Nature and Society are in accord. In this, Society thinks that it has enriched Nature, it has augmented the maternal sentiment by the spirit of

the family, by the continuity of the name, of the blood, of the fortune. With what love should a woman not surround the dear being who the first has enabled her to know such joys, who for her has caused to be displayed the strength of her soul and has taught to her the great art of maternity? The institution of birthright, which in antiquity was intimately connected with the right of the eldest in the world and contributed to the origin of the various societies, it seems to me should not be taken into consideration. Ah! how many things an infant teaches its mother. There are so many promises made between us and virtue in that incessant protection due to a feeble being, that the woman is only in her true sphere when she is a mother; it is only then that she displays all her forces, she practises the duties of her life, she has of it all the happinesses and all the pleasures. A woman who is not a mother is a being incomplete and who has failed. Hurry then to be a mother, my angel! You will multiply your actual happiness by all my delights.

23d.

I left you when I heard monsieur, your godson, cry, and this cry I heard from the end of the garden. I do not wish to send off this letter without saying to you a farewell word; I have just re-read it, and am frightened at the commonness of the sentiment which it contains. That which I feel, alas! it seems to me that all mothers have experienced it like

myself, should express it in the same manner, and that you will laugh at me, as people laugh at the simplicity of all those fathers who relate to you the cleverness and the beauty of their children, finding in them always something particular. Finally, dear mignonne, the great word of this letter is this, I repeat it to you,—I am as happy now as I was unhappy formerly. This country house, which moreover is going to become an estate, a majorat, is for me the promised land. I have ended by crossing my desert. A thousand tendernesses, dear mignonne. Write to me, I can to-day read without weeping the description of your happiness and of your love. Adieu.

XXXII

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE

March, 1826.

What, my dear, more than three months since I wrote to you and since I have received any letters from you!—I am the more culpable of the two, I have not replied to you; but you are not sensitive, that I know. Your silence has been taken by Macumer and myself as an agreement to the déjeuner service decorated with child figures, and these charming objects will be sent off this morning to Marseilles; the artists have taken six months to execute them. Thus I suddenly came to myself with a start when Felipe proposed to me to go and see

the service before the goldsmith packed it up. It suddenly occurred to me that we had written nothing to each other since the letter in which I felt myself a mother with you.

My angel, the terrible Paris, that is my excuse for myself; I am waiting for yours. Oh the world, what a gulf! Have I not already said to you that one can only be a Parisienne in Paris? The world here destroys all the feelings, it occupies all your hours, it will devour your heart if you do not take care. What an astonishing masterpiece is that creation of Célimène in *Le Misanthrope* by Molière! It is the woman of the world of the time of Louis XIV. as of that of our time, in short, a woman of the world of every epoch. Where should I be in it all were it not for my Ægis, without my love for Felipe? Thus I said to him this morning while making these reflections, that he is my savior. If my evenings are filled by the fêtes, by the balls, by the concerts, and by the theatres, I find again on my return the joys of love and its follies which expand my heart, which efface in it the injuries caused by the world. I only dine at home on the days on which we have people who are called friends, and I do not remain at home excepting for my days. I have my day, Wednesday, on which I receive. I have engaged in a struggle with Mesdames d'Espard and De Maufrigneuse, with the old Duchesse de Lenoncourt. My house has the reputation of being an entertaining one. I have let myself be carried away by the current of the world in seeing my Felipe happy in

my success. I give to him the mornings; for, from four o'clock up to two o'clock in the morning, I belong to Paris. Macumer is an admirable master of the house,—he is so acute and so grave, so truly grand and of such perfect grace, that he would make himself loved by a woman who had married him conventionally. My father and my mother have gone to Madrid,—Louis XVIII. being dead, the duchess readily secured from our good Charles X. the appointment of her charming poet, whom she carried off with her in his quality of attaché. My brother, the Duc de Rhétoré, deigns to regard me as a superior being. As to the Comte de Chaulieu, this fancy soldier should owe me an eternal gratitude,—my fortune was employed, before my father's departure, in constituting for him in lands a majorat of forty thousand francs of income, and his marriage with Mademoiselle de Mortsauf, a rich heiress of Touraine, is all arranged. The king, in order that the names and the titles of the houses of Lenoncourt and of Givry should not be extinguished, has authorized my brother by an ordinance to succeed to the name, titles and arms of the Lenoncourt-Givrys. How, in fact, could these fine names and the sublime device: *Faciem semper monstramus*, be allowed to perish! Mademoiselle de Mortsauf, granddaughter and only heiress of the Duc de Lenoncourt-Givry, reunites in her own right it is said more than a hundred thousand francs income. My father only demanded that the arms of the Chaulieus should be placed in the centre of those of

the Lenoncourts. Thus my brother will be Duc de Lenoncourt. The young De Mortsauf, to whom all this fortune should go, is in the last stage of consumption; his death is expected momentarily. Next winter, after the mourning, the marriage will take place. I shall have, they say, for sister-in-law a charming person in Madeleine de Mortsauf. Thus as you see, my father was right in his reasoning. This result has procured me the admiration of a great many persons, and my marriage is accounted for. Through affection for my grandmother, the Prince de Talleyrand praises Macumer, so that our success is complete. After having commenced by blaming me, society now highly approves of me. I reign finally, then, in that Paris in which I was of so small account nearly two years ago. Macumer sees his happiness envied by all the world, for I am *the cleverest woman in Paris*. You know that there are twenty "cleverest women in Paris" in Paris. The men coo to me phrases of love or content themselves with expressing them in envious regards. Truly, there is in this concert of desires and of admiration a so constant satisfaction of the vanity, that now I comprehend the excessive outlay made by women to enjoy these frail and passing advantages. This triumph intoxicates the pride, the vanity, the self-love, in short all the sentiments of the *I*. This perpetual deification intoxicates so violently that I am no longer astonished to see the women becoming egotistical, forgetful and frivolous in the midst of this festival. The world flies to the

head. One squanders the flowers of one's wit and of one's soul, one's most precious time, one's most generous efforts, upon people who pay you in jealousy and in smiles, who sell to you the counterfeit money of their phrases, of their compliments and of their adulation against the golden ingots of your courage, of your sacrifices, of your inventions for being beautiful, well dressed, clever, affable and agreeable to all. You know how costly is this commerce, you know that you are robbed, but you give yourself up to it all the same Ah, my beautiful lamb, how much one has need of the heart of a friend, how precious are the love and the devotion of Felipe! how much I love you! With what happiness are the preparations for a journey made to go and seek at Chantepleurs rest from the comedies of the Rue du Bac and of all the salons of Paris! In short, I who have just re-read your last letter, I shall have painted for you this infernal paradise of Paris in telling you that it is impossible for a woman of society to be a mother.

Good-bye for a short time, dearest; we will only stop for a week at the most at Chantepleurs and we will be with you about the tenth of May. We are then going to see each other again after more than two years! And what changes! We are both wives,—I the most happy of mistresses, you, the most happy of mothers. If I have not written to you, my dear love, I have not forgotten you. And my godson, that monkey, is he still pretty? does he do me honor? He will be more than nine months

old. I wish to assist at his first steps in the world; but Macumer tells me that precocious children scarcely walk at ten months. We will then have our little gossip, in the manner of the Blésois. I will see if, as is said, child-bearing spoils the figure.

P. S. If you answer, sublime mother, address your letter to Chantepleurs, I am setting out.

XXXIII

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER

Eh! my child, if ever you become a mother, you will know if one can write letters during the first two months of nursing. Mary, my English nurse, and I, we are fagged out. It is true that I did not tell you that I insist upon doing everything myself. Before the event, I sewed and embroidered with my own fingers all the baby linen, trimmed the caps myself. I am a slave, my mignonne, a slave day and night. And in the first place, Armand-Louis sucks whenever he wants to, and he wants to all the time; then it is necessary to change him so often, to clean him, to clothe him; the mother loves so much to look at him when he is asleep, to sing songs to him, to promenade him when it is pleasant holding him in her arms, that she has no time in which to take care of herself. In short, you have the world, I have my child, our child! What a rich

and full life! Oh my dear, I am waiting for you, you will see! But I fear that teething time is about to commence, and that you will find him very noisy, very weeping. He has not cried much as yet, for I am always on hand. Babies only cry because they have wants which one does not know how to find out, and I know the indications of all his. Oh my angel, how my heart has enlarged while you have been shriveling yours in putting it at the service of the world! I am waiting for you with the impatience of a solitary. I wish to know your opinion of L'Estorade, as you doubtless wish to have mine on Macumer. Write me your last sleeping place. My men wish to go to meet our illustrious guests. Come, queen of Paris, come to our poor country house, where you will be loved!

XXXIV

MADAME DE MACUMER TO THE VICOMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE

April, 1826.

The address of my letter will announce to you, my dear, the success of my efforts. Your father-in-law is now Comte de l'Estorade. I did not wish to leave Paris without having obtained for you that which you desired, and I am writing to you in the presence of the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal who has come to tell me that the ordinance is signed.

Good-bye, hoping to see you very soon.

XXXV

THE SAME TO THE SAME

Marseilles, July.

My sudden departure must have astonished you, I am ashamed of it; but, as before all I am truthful and as I love you always as much as ever, I am going to tell you frankly the whole in four words,—I am horribly jealous. Felipe looked at you too much. You had together at the foot of your rock little conversations which put me to the torture, rendered me evil and changed all my character. Your beauty, truly Spanish, must have recalled to him his country and that Marie Hérédia of whom I am jealous, for I am jealous of the past. Your magnificent black hair, your beautiful brown eyes, that forehead on which the joys of maternity brought into relief your eloquent past sorrows, which are like the shadows of a radiant light; that freshness of the meridional skin, whiter than my whiteness of the blonde; that strength and fulness of form, that breast which shone among the laces like a delicious fruit to which was suspended my beautiful godson; all that wounded my eyes and my heart. It was all very well for me at one time to put blue corn flowers in my bunchy hair, at another time to relieve the insipidity of my blonde tresses by cherry ribbons,—it all paled before a Renée whom I did not expect to find in this oasis of La Crampade.

Felipe envied also too much that child, whom I

took to hating. Yes, this insolent life which filled all your household, which animated it, which cried there, which laughed there, I wished it for myself. I read regrets in the eyes of Macumer, I wept because of it during two nights, unknown to him. I was in torment in your house. You are too beautiful a woman and too happy a mother for me to be able to remain near you. Ah, hypocrite, you complain! In the first place, your L'Estorade is very fine, he talks agreeably; his black hairs mingled with white are handsome; he has fine eyes, and his meridional ways have that *I do not know what* which pleases. From what I have seen, he will sooner or later be made deputy from the Bouches-du-Rhône; he will make his way in the Chamber, for I am always at your service in all that concerns your ambition. The sufferings of exile have given him that calm and regulated air which seems to me to be the half of politics. According to me, my dear, the whole political science consists in a grave appearance. Thus I have said to Macumer that he should be a very great statesman.

In short, after having acquired the certainty of your happiness, I am going in full flight, content, to my dear Chantepleurs, where Felipe will prepare to be a father; I do not wish to receive you there unless I have at my breast a beautiful infant like yours. I deserve all the names that you would wish to give me,—I am ridiculous, disgraceful, without sense. Alas! one is all that when one is jealous. I do not wish to quarrel with you, but I was

suffering, and you will forgive me for having escaped from such suffering. In two days more I should have committed some stupidity. Yes, I should have been in very bad taste. Notwithstanding these rages which gnaw at my heart, I am happy at having come, happy to have seen you, a mother, so beautiful and so fruitful, still my friend in the midst of your maternal joys, as I remain always yours in the midst of my love. Behold, at Marseilles, at a few steps from you, I am already proud of you, proud of that great mother of a family which you will be. With what judgment did you divine your vocation! For you seem to me born to be rather mother than lover, as I—I am born rather for love than for maternity. Certain women can be neither mothers nor lovers, they are either too ugly or too stupid. A good mother and a mistress-wife should have under all circumstances wit, judgment, and know, whatever might arise, how to display the most exquisite qualities of a woman. Oh! I observed you closely; is that not the same as saying, my kitten, that I admired you? Yes, your children will be happy and well brought up, they will be bathed in the effusions of your tendernesses, caressed by the light of your soul.

Tell the truth concerning my departure to your Louis, but color it with a reasonable pretext for the eyes of your father-in-law, who seems to be your intendant, and above all for the eyes of your family, a true family Harlowe, plus the Provençal spirit. Felipe does not know yet why I left, he will never

know it. If he asks, I will find for him some pretext or other. I will say to him probably that you were jealous of me. Bear me out in this little friendly falsehood. Adieu; I am writing to you hurriedly so that you may have this letter at the hour of your déjeuner, and the postilion who has orders that this shall be done is here drinking while he waits. Kiss well my dear little godson for me. Come to Chantepleurs in the month of October, I shall be there alone during all the time that Macumer is going to pass in Sardinia, where he wishes to make great alterations in his domains. At least such is the project of the moment, and it is his own foolishness to think that he has a project, he thinks himself independent,—thus he is always uneasy in communicating his plans to me. Adieu!

XXXVI

THE VICOMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO THE BARONNE DE MACUMER

My dear, we all of us were inexpressibly astonished when, at déjeuner, they told us that you had departed, and above all when the postilion whom you had carried off to Marseilles handed me your crazy letter. But, wicked one, there was no discussion of anything but of your happiness in those conversations at the foot of the rock, on "Louise's bench," and you were very wrong to take offense at them. *Ingrata!* I condemn you to return here

at my first summons. In that odious letter scrawled on the hotel paper, you have not told me where you would stop; I am therefore obliged to address my reply to you at Chantepleurs.

Listen to me, dear sister of election, and know before all that I wish you happiness. Your husband, my Louise, has a fathomless depth of soul and of thought which is imposing as much as his natural gravity and his noble countenance are imposing; then there is in his ugliness which is so spiritual, in that velvet glance, a truly majestic power; it therefore required some time for me to establish that familiarity without which it is difficult to closely observe. Finally, this man has been prime minister, and he adores you as he adores God,—therefore, he should be able to dissimulate thoroughly; and in order to fish out the secrets from the depths of this diplomat, under the rocks of his heart, I had to display as much skilfulness as shrewdness; but I ended, without our man thinking of it, by discovering a great many things of which my mignonne has no suspicions. Of us two, I represent somewhat Reason as you are Imagination; I am the great Duty, as you are the foolish Love. This contrast of spirit which existed only for us two, fate has been pleased to continue in our destinies. I am a humble rural viscountess, excessively ambitious, who should conduct her family in the way of prosperity; whilst all the world knows Macumer, ex-duke of Soria, and that, duchess by right, you reign over that Paris where it is difficult for anyone

whatever, even for the kings, to reign. You have a fine fortune which Macumer will double, if he realizes his projects of improvements for his immense domain of Sardinia, the resources of which are well known in Marseilles. Admit that, if either of us should have been jealous, it was I. But let us render thanks to God that we have each of us a heart sufficiently elevated to place our friendship above vulgar pettinesses. I know you,—you are ashamed of having left me. Notwithstanding your flight, I shall not spare you a single one of the words which I was going to say to you to-day under the rock. Read this then with attention, I entreat you, for it is much more a question of you than of Macumer, although he counts for a good deal in my morality. In the first place, my mignonne, you do not love him. In less than two years you will be wearied of this adoration. You will never see in Felipe a husband, but rather a lover with whom you will play carelessly, as all women do with a lover. No, he does not overawe you, you have not for him that profound respect, that tenderness full of fear which a true loving woman has for him in whom she sees a god. Oh! I have well studied love, my angel, and I have more than once sounded the depths of my heart. After having well examined you, I can say to you: "you do not love." Yes, dear queen of Paris, just like the queens, you will desire to be treated like a grisette, you will wish to be dominated, carried away by a strong man who, instead of adoring you, will know how to crush your arm

in seizing you in the midst of a scene of jealousy. Macumer loves you too much to be able ever either to reprimand you or to resist you. One of your looks only, one only of your cajoling words, would dissolve the strongest of his wishes. Sooner or later, you will despise him for this, that he loves you too much. Alas! he spoils you, as I spoiled you when we were at the convent, for you are one of the most seductive women and one of the most enchanting spirits that can be imagined. You are true above all, and often the world exacts, for our own happiness, falsehoods to which you will never descend. Thus, the world demands that a wife shall never let the empire which she exercises over her husband appear. Socially speaking, a husband should no more appear to be the lover of his wife when he loves her as a lover, than a wife should play the rôle of a mistress. Now, you both of you fail in this law. My child, in the first place, that which the world pardons the least, judging from what you have told me about it, is happiness, it should be hidden from it; but this is nothing. There exists between lovers an equality which can never, in my opinion, appear between a wife and her husband, under penalty of a social overturning and without irreparable misfortunes. A man null is something frightful; but there is something worse, it is a man annulled. Within a certain length of time, you will have reduced Macumer to the state of being only the shadow of a man: he will no longer have his will, he will no longer be himself,

but a thing fashioned to your usage; you will have him so well assimilated that instead of being two, there will no longer be but one person in your household, and this being will be necessarily incomplete; you will suffer for it, and the evil will be without remedy when you deign to open your eyes. We may do what we will, our sex will never be endowed with the qualities which distinguish the man; and these qualities are more than necessary, they are indispensable to the Family. At this moment, notwithstanding his blindness, Macumer has glimpses of this future, he feels himself diminished by his love. His journey to Sardinia proves to me that he is going to endeavor to recover himself by this momentary separation. You do not hesitate to exercise the power with which love endows you. Your authority is shown in a gesture, in the look, in the accent. Oh, dear, you are, as your mother said to you, an extravagant courtesan. Certainly it is evident to you, I think, that I am much superior to Louis; but have you ever seen me contradicting him? am I not in public a wife who respects him as the head of the family? Hypocrisy! do you say. In the first place, the counsel which I think it advisable to give him, my advice, my ideas, I never submit them to him but in the shadow and the silence of the bedchamber; but I can swear to you, my angel, that even then I do not affect any superiority to him. If I did not keep up every appearance of being his dutiful wife, he would not believe in himself. My dear, the perfection of

benevolence consists in effacing itself so completely that the favored one does not think himself inferior to him who favors him; and this concealed devotion admits of infinite contentment. Thus, my glory has been to deceive you yourself, and you have complimented me on Louis. Prosperity, happiness, hope, have moreover permitted him to regain within the last two years all that misfortune, misery, abandonment and doubt had made him lose. At this moment, then, according to my observations, I find that you love Felipe for yourself and not for himself. There is truth in that which your father said to you,—your egotism of the great lady is only disguised under the spring flowers of your love. Ah, my child, it is necessary to love you well to tell you such cruel truths. Let me repeat to you, under the condition of never breathing the least word of this to the baron, the end of one of our conversations. We had been singing your praises in all tones, for he saw clearly that I loved you like a beloved sister; and after having led him, without his being aware of it, to confidences:

"Louise," I said to him, "has not yet had any struggles with life, she is treated like a spoiled child by fate, and perhaps she will be unhappy if you should not be a father for her as you are a lover."

"Eh! can I?" he said.

He stopped short, like a man who sees the precipice over which he will fall. This exclamation sufficed for me. If you had not departed, he would have said more to me a few days later.

My angel, when this man shall be without strength, when he shall have found satiety in pleasures; when he shall feel, I will not say debased, but without his dignity, before you,—the reproaches which his conscience will make him, will give him a sort of remorse, wounding for you also through the very fact that you shall feel yourself culpable. In short, you will finish by holding in contempt the one whom you have not been in the habit of respecting. Think of it: contempt with a woman is the first manifestation of her hate. As you are noble of heart, you will always remember the sacrifices which Felipe will have made for you; but he will have no more to make to you after having in some sort served up himself in this first festival, and woe to the man as to the woman who leaves nothing to wish for! All is said. To our shame or to our glory, I cannot decide this delicate point, we are exacting only for the man who loves us!

O Louise, change, it is yet time. You can, in your conduct with Macumer as I do with L'Estorade, arouse the lion hidden in this truly superior man. It might almost be said that you wish to avenge yourself of his superiority. Will you not then be proud to exercise your power otherwise than for your own profit, to make a man of genius out of a great man, as I make a superior man out of an ordinary man?

If you had remained in the country, I would still have written you this letter; I would have feared your petulance and your wit in a conversation,

while I know that you will reflect on your future when you read this. Dear soul, you have everything necessary to make you happy, do not spoil your happiness, and return in the month of November to Paris. The cares and the enticements of the world of which I complained are diversions necessary to your existence, which is perhaps a little too intimate. A married woman should have her little coquetry. The mother of a family who does not make her presence desired by making herself rare in the bosom of the family runs the risk of bringing satiety into it. If I have several children, which I wish for my happiness, I swear to you that as soon as they arrive at a certain age I shall reserve for myself hours during which I shall be alone; for it is necessary to make yourself asked for by all the world, even by your children. Adieu, dear jealous one! Do you know that a common woman would be flattered to have occasioned you this jealousy? Alas! I can only distress myself over it, for there is in me only a mother and a sincere friend. A thousand tendernesses. Do whatever you like to excuse your departure: if you are not sure of Felipe, I am sure of Louis.

XXXVII

THE BARONNE DE MACUMER TO THE VICOMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE

Genoa.

My beautiful dear, I have had a fancy to see a little of Italy, and I am delighted to have carried off

Macumer, whose projects concerning his Sardinia estates are postponed.

This country enchants me and fills me with delight. Here the churches and above all the chapels, have an amorous and coquettish air which should make a Protestant desire to turn Catholic. Macumer has been fêted, and much rejoicing has been expressed over the acquisition of such a subject. If I should desire it, Felipe would be the Ambassador of Sardinia at Paris; for the Court is quite devoted to me. If you write to me, address your letters to Florence. I have not too much time to write to you in detail, I will relate my journey to you on your first visit to Paris. We will remain here only a week. Then we will go to Florence by Leghorn, we will stop a month in Tuscany and a month in Naples, so as to be in Rome in November. We will come back by Venice, where we will stay the first two weeks in December; then we will arrive by way of Milan and Turin in Paris for the month of January. We are traveling as lovers,—the novelty of the localities renews our wedding days. Macumer does not know Italy, and we commenced by that magnificent road of the Corniche, which seems to have been built by the fairies. Adieu, dearest. Do not complain of me if I do not write to you; it is impossible for me to find a moment to myself while traveling; I have only the time to see, to feel, and to appreciate my impressions. But, to tell you about them, I shall wait until they have taken the tints of memories.

XXXVIII

THE VICOMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO THE BARONNE DE MACUMER

September.

My dear, there is for you at Chantepleurs a sufficiently long answer to the letter which you wrote me from Marseilles. This journey made as lovers is so far from diminishing the fears which I expressed to you in it, that I entreat you to write to Nivernais to have my letter sent to you.

The Ministry has resolved, it is said, to dissolve the Chamber. If this is unfortunate for the Crown, which should employ the last session of this devoted Legislature to secure the laws necessary to the consolidation of power, it is so for us also,— Louis will not be forty until the end of 1827. Fortunately, my father, who consents to become a deputy, will give in his resignation in time.

Your godson has taken his first steps without his godmother; he is, moreover, quite admirable and begins to make to me those graceful little gestures which say to me that this is no longer only an organ which takes the breast, an animal life, but a soul: his smiles are full of thoughts. I am so favored in my trade of nurse, that I shall wean our Armand in December. A year of milk is sufficient. The children who nurse too much become stupid. I believe in the popular sayings. You should have a

wild success in Italy, my beautiful blonde. A thousand tendernesses.

XXXIX

THE BARONNE DE MACUMER TO THE VICOMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE

Rome, December.

I have your infamous letter, which at my request, my administrator has sent to me here from Chantepleurs. Oh Renée—. But I spare you all that my indignation could suggest to me. I will only relate to you the effects produced by your letter. On our return from the charming fête which had been given us by the ambassador, and where I shone with all my splendor, from which Macumer returned intoxicated with his admiration for me to such a degree that I should not know how to describe it, I read to him your horrible answer, and I read it to him weeping at the risk of appearing ugly to him. My dear Abencerrage fell at my feet, declaring that you were as one in her dotage: he led me out on the balcony of the palace where we are and from which we can see a part of Rome,—there his language was worthy of the scene which offered itself to our eyes; for there was a superb moonlight. As we already speak Italian, his love, expressed in this language so soft and so suitable for passion, appeared to me sublime. He said to me that, even if you should be a true prophet, he would prefer a happy night, or

one of our delicious mornings, to a whole life. By this counting, he had already lived a thousand years. He wished that I should remain his mistress, and desired no other title than that of my lover. He is so proud and so happy to see himself every day the preferred one, that, if God should appear to him and give him the choice of living thirty years longer according to your doctrine and having five children, or of having only five years more of life continuing our dear and flowery loves, his choice would be made,—he would prefer to be loved as I love him and to die. These protestations said in my ear, my head on his shoulder, his arm around my waist, were troubled at that moment by the cries of some bat which a screech owl had surprised. This death-cry made so cruel an impression upon me that Felipe carried me off, half-fainting, to my bed. But you may reassure yourself! although this evil omen resounded in my soul, this morning I am very well. When I rose, I placed myself on my knees before Felipe, and my eyes on his, his hands taken in mine, I said to him:

"My angel, I am a child and Renée may be right: it is perhaps only love which I love in you; but at least know that there is no other sentiment in my heart, and that I love you then in my own way. Truly, if in my manners, if in the least things of my life and of my soul, there has been anything whatever contrary to that which you wish or hope of me, tell it to me! let me know it! I shall have pleasure in listening to you and in conducting

myself only by the light of your eyes. Renée has frightened me, she loves me so much!"

Macumer had no voice with which to answer me, he melted into tears. Now, I thank you, my Renée; I did not know how much I was loved by my splendid, by my royal, Macumer. Rome is the city in which one loves. When one has a passion, it is there that you should go to enjoy it: you will have all the arts and God for confederates. We will meet at Venice the Duke and the Duchess of Soria. If you write to me, write to me now at Paris, for we leave Rome in three days. The fête of the ambassador was a farewell one.

P. S. Dear imbecile, your letter shows that you only know love theoretically. Know then that love is a principle, all the effects of which are so dissimilar that no one theory would know how to embrace them all nor to teach them all. This is for my little doctor in a corset.

XL

THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO THE BARONNE DE MACUMER

January, 1827.

My father is appointed, my father-in-law is dead, and I am again about to undergo the sufferings of maternity,—these are the events which mark the

end of this year. I tell them to you immediately, so that the impression which my black seal may make upon you may be immediately removed.

My mignonne, your letter from Rome has made me shudder. You are two children. Felipe is either a diplomat who has dissimulated, or a man who loves you as he would love a courtesan to whom he would abandon his fortune while knowing that she betrayed him. But there is quite enough of this. You take me for one in her dotage, I will say no more. But permit me to say to you that in studying our two destinies I draw from them a cruel principle:—Do you wish to be loved, do not love.

Louis, my dear, has received the cross of the Legion of Honor when he was made member of the Council General. Now, as it is nearly three years that he has been with the Council, and that my father, whom you will doubtless see at Paris during the Session, has asked for his son-in-law the grade of officer, do me the pleasure to approach the functionary, whoever he may be, who has charge of this nomination, and to watch over this little affair. Above all, do not interest yourself in the affairs of my very honored father, the Comte de Maucombe, who wishes to obtain the title of marquis; keep your favors for me. When Louis shall be a deputy, that is to say, next winter, we will come to Paris, and we will then move heaven and earth there in order to secure for him some office of general direction so that we may be able to save all our income by living on the salary of the office. My father

sits between the Centre and the Right, he asks only a title; our family was already celebrated under the King René, the King Charles X. will not refuse a Maucombe; but I am afraid that my father may take it into his head to demand some favor for my younger brother; and, by putting the sugar-plum of the marquisate a little too high, he may be able to think only of himself.

January 15th.

Ah! Louise, I have come out of Hell! If I have the courage to speak to you of my sufferings it is because you seem to me my other self. Still I do not know if I shall ever let my thoughts return to these five fatal days! The one word "convulsions" gives me a shiver in the very soul. It is not five days which have just passed, but five centuries of anguish. So long as a mother has not suffered this martyrdom, she will remain ignorant of the meaning of the word suffering. I thought you happy not to have any children, you may judge by this of my want of reason!

The evening of the terrible day, the weather which had been heavy and almost hot, seemed to me to have worried my little Armand. He, so gentle and so caressing, he was peevish and cross; he cried at everything, he wished to play and broke his toys. Perhaps all sicknesses announce themselves in children by changes of temper. Watchful of this singular wickedness, I observed in Armand flushes and palings which I attributed to the coming

of four large teeth which he was cutting at once. Therefore I took him to bed with me, waking from time to time. During the night he had a little fever which did not disquiet me,—I ascribed it all to the teeth. Towards morning he said to me: "Mama!" asking for a drink with a gesture, but with a tone in his voice, with a convulsive movement in the gesture, which froze my blood. I leaped out of bed to prepare for him his sugared water. Judge of my fright when, in presenting the cup to him, I did not see him make any movement; he repeated only: "Mama!" in that voice which was no longer his voice, which was even not any longer a voice. I took his hand, but it no longer responded, it stiffened. I put the cup to his lips; the poor little one drank in a frightful manner, with three or four convulsive swallows, and the water made a singular noise in his throat. Finally he grasped me desperately and I saw his eyes, drawn by an interior force, become white, his limbs lose their suppleness. I uttered frightened cries. Louis came.

"A doctor! a doctor!—he is dying!" I cried to him.

Louis disappeared, and my poor Armand said again: "Mama! Mama!" clinging to me. This was the last moment that he knew that he had a mother. The pretty blood-vessels of his forehead became congested, and the convulsions commenced. An hour before the arrival of the doctors, I held this infant so lively, so white and so pink, this flower which made my pride and my joy, stiff as a piece

of wood; and what eyes! I shudder in remembering them. Black, contracted, misshapen, mute, my gentle Armand was a mummy. A doctor, two doctors, brought from Marseilles by Louis, stood there planted on their legs like two birds of evil augury, they made me shiver. The one spoke of cerebral fever, the other saw convulsions, such as children have. The doctor of our canton seemed to me the most reliable, because he prescribed nothing. "It is the teeth," said the second.—"It is a fever," said the first. Finally, they agreed to put leeches on the neck and ice on the head. I felt myself dying. To be there, to see a corpse blue or black, not a cry, not a movement, in place of a creature so noisy and so full of life! There was a moment when my mind wandered, and when I had something like a fit of nervous laughter in seeing this pretty neck, which I had so often kissed, bitten by the leeches, and this charming head under a cap of ice. My dear, it was necessary to cut off that pretty hair which we admired so much, and which you have caressed, to be able to put on the ice. Every ten minutes, as in my childbirth pains. the convulsions returned, and the poor little thing twisted himself, sometimes pale and sometimes violet. When they struck against each other, his limbs, so flexible, made a sound as if they were of wood. This insensible creature had smiled at me, had spoken to me, had called me but so short a time before, "Mama!" With these thoughts, waves of sorrow traversed my soul, agitating it as the storms agitate

the sea, and I felt all the bonds by which a child is attached to our heart loosened. My mother, who perhaps might have helped me, advised or consoled me, is in Paris. The mothers know more about convulsions than the doctors, I believe. After four days and four nights passed in intermissions and in fears which almost killed me, the doctors were all of them resolved to apply a frightful pomade to make wounds! Oh! wounds on my Armand who was playing five days before, who smiled, who tried to say: "Godmother!" I refused to consent, wishing to trust to nature. Louis scolded me, he believed in the doctors. A man is always a man. But there are in these terrible maladies moments when they take the form of death; and during one of these moments, this remedy, which I abominated, appeared to me to be the salvation of Armand. My Louise, his skin was so dry, so rough, and without feeling, that the ointment did not take. I threw myself in tears on the bed, weeping so that the side of the bed was all wet. The doctors were dining! they were! Seeing myself alone, I took off my child all the doctors' local applications, I took him, almost mad, in my arms, I pressed him against my chest, I leaned my forehead on his forehead praying God to give him my life, all the while endeavoring to communicate it to him. I held him in this manner for several minutes, wishing to die with him so as not to be separated from him, neither in life nor in death. My dear, I felt his members relax; the convulsions had yielded, my child had moved, the

sinister and horrible colors had disappeared! I cried out as I had done when he fell ill, the doctors came upstairs, I showed to them Armand.

"He is saved!" cried the oldest of the physicians.

Oh! what a word! what music! The heavens opened. In fact, two hours later Armand came to life again; but I was extinguished, I should have fallen ill of some malady had it not been for the balm of joy. Oh, my God! by what sorrows do you attach the child to its mother! what nails you drive into the heart so that he may cling to them! Was I not then enough of a mother already, I whom the stammerings and the first steps of this infant had caused to weep for joy! I who had studied him through entire hours so that I might thoroughly fulfill my duties, and instruct myself in the sweet business of a mother! Was it necessary to cause these terrors, to offer these frightful images to her who makes of her child an idol? At this moment when I am writing to you, our Armand is playing, he cries, he laughs. I am endeavoring to find out the causes of this horrible sickness of children, remembering that I am pregnant. Is it the growth of the teeth? is it some peculiar operation which takes place in the head? Have the children who suffer from convulsions an imperfection in the nervous system? All these ideas disquiet me as much for the present as for the future. Our country doctor believes in a nervous excitation caused by the teeth. I would give all mine to have those of our little Armand all complete. When I see one of those

white pearls showing itself in the middle of his inflamed gums, it now gives me cold sweats. The heroism with which this dear angel suffers shows me that he will have all my character; he gives me looks which might melt the heart. The science of medicine does not know much about this species of tetanus which ends as rapidly as it begins, which can neither be foreseen nor cured. I repeat it to you, one thing alone is certain,—to see her child in convulsions, that is the Hell of mothers. With what rage I embrace him! Oh! how long I keep him on my arm in walking him up and down! To have had this anguish when I must again give birth to an infant in six weeks, this was a horrible aggravation of martyrdom, I was afraid for the other! Adieu, my dear and well beloved Louise; do not wish to have any children, this is my last word.

XLI

THE BARONNE DE MACUMER TO THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE

Paris.

Poor angel, Macumer and I, we have forgiven your *badnesses* in learning how you have been tormented. I shuddered, I suffered in reading the details of that double torture, and I am now less distressed at not being a mother. I hasten to announce to you the nomination of Louis, who may now wear the rosette of an officer. You desire a

little girl; probably you will have one, happy Renée! The marriage of my brother and Mademoiselle de Mortsauf was celebrated on our return. Our charming king, who certainly is of an admirable goodness, has given to my brother the reversion of the office of First Gentleman of the Chamber which is filled by his father-in-law.

"The office should go with the titles," he said to the Duc de Lenoncourt-Givry.

Only, he desired that the arms of Mortsauf should be united to those of Lenoncourt.

My father was right a hundred times. Had it not been for my fortune, nothing of all this would have taken place. My father and my mother have come from Madrid for this marriage and return there after the fête which I give to-morrow to the newly married couple. The carnival will be very brilliant. The Duke and the Duchess of Soria are in Paris; their presence disquiets me a little. Marie Hérédia is certainly one of the most beautiful women of Europe, I do not like the manner in which Felipe looks at her. Thus, I redouble my love and my tenderness. "*She* would never have loved you thus!" is a speech which I am very careful not to make, but which is written in all my looks, in all my movements. God knows if I am elegant and coquettish. Yesterday, Madame de Maufrigneuse said to me:

"Dear child, we have to lay down our arms to you!"

In short, I amuse Felipe so much that he should

find his sister-in-law as stupid as a Spanish cow. I have so much the less regret at not making a little Abencerrage, that the duchess will doubtless have her baby in Paris, she is going to become ugly; if she has a boy, he will be named Felipe in honor of the banished one. A malicious chance will cause me to be godmother again. Adieu, dear. I shall go early this year to Chantepleurs, for our journey costs exorbitant sums; I shall depart about the end of March in order to go and live economically in Nivernais. Paris wearies me, moreover. Felipe sighs as much as I for the beautiful solitude of our park, our fresh meadows and our Loire spangled with its sands, and which no other river resembles. Chantepleurs will appear to me delightful after the pomps and the vanities of Italy; for, after all, magnificence is tiresome, and the regard of a lover is more beautiful than a *capo d'opera,* than a *bel quadro!* We shall expect you there; I shall no longer be jealous of you. You may sound at your leisure the heart of my Macumer, fish in it for interjections, bring out of it scruples, I deliver it to you with a superb confidence. Since the scene in Rome, Felipe loves me still more; he said to me yesterday—he is looking over my shoulder—that his sister-in-law, the Marie of his youth, his former fiancée, the Princess Hérédia, his first dream, was stupid. Oh! dear, I am worse than a dancer at the Opera, this insult caused me pleasure. I have caused Felipe to remark that she does not speak French correctly,—she pronounces *esemple* for *exemple*, *sain* for *cinq,*

cheu for *je;* in short, she is beautiful but she has no grace, she has not the least vivacity of spirit. When you address a compliment to her she looks at you like a woman who is not accustomed to receiving them. With the character which he has, he would have left Marie after two months of marriage. The Duc de Soria, Don Fernand, is very well matched with her; he is generous but he is a spoiled child, that is to be seen. I could be wicked and make you laugh; but I am sticking to the truth. A thousand tendernesses, my angel.

XLII

RENÉE TO LOUISE

My little girl is two months old: my mother was the godmother, and an old grand-uncle of Louis, the godfather of this little one, who is named Jeanne-Athénaïs.

As soon as I shall be able, I shall set out to come and see you at Chantepleurs, since a nurse does not frighten you. Your godson says your name, he pronounces it *Matoumer!* for he cannot say the "C" any other way; you will dote on him; he has all his teeth; he eats meat now like a big boy, he runs and trots like a rat; but I follow him everywhere with anxious glances and I am in despair at not being able to keep him near me during my confinement, which requires more than forty days in my room, because of some precautions ordered by the

doctors. Alas! my child, one does not get into the habit of bearing children! The same pains and the same apprehensions return. Nevertheless—do not show my letter to Felipe—I count for something in the making of this little girl, who may perhaps wrong your Armand.

My father found Felipe grown thinner, and my dear mignonne a little thinner also. However, the Duke and the Duchess of Soria have departed,—there is no longer the least occasion for jealousy! Are you hiding from me some grief? Your letter was neither as long nor as affectionately conceived as the others. Is it only a caprice of my dear capricious one?

This is already too much, my nurse scolds me for writing to you, and Mademoiselle Athénaïs de l'Estorade wishes to dine. Farewell then; write me good long letters.

XLIII

MADAME DE MACUMER TO THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE

For the first time in my life, my dear Renée, I have wept alone under a willow on a wooden bench on the shores of my long pond of Chantepleurs, a delightful view which you are coming to embellish, for there is wanting to it only joyful children. Your fruitfulness has caused me to turn my thoughts upon myself, who have no children after nearly three

years of married life. "Oh!" I thought, "though I should suffer a hundred times more than Renée suffered in giving birth to my godson, though I should see my child in convulsions, grant, my God, that I should have an angelic creature like that little Athénaïs whom I see from here as beautiful as the day!" for you have said nothing to me about her! I have recognized in that my Renée. It seems that you guess my sufferings. Each time that my hopes are disappointed I am for several days given up to a dark grief.—I can then only make sombre elegies. When shall I embroider little caps? when shall I select the linen of a baby's wardrobe? when shall I sew pretty laces to envelop a little head? Shall I then never hear one of these charming creatures call me "mama," hold me by my dress, tyrannize over me? Shall I then never see on the sand the tracks of a little baby-carriage? Shall I never pick up the broken playthings in my courtyard? Shall I not go, like so many mothers whom I have seen, into the toy shops to buy sabres, dolls, little households? Shall I never see developing that life and that angel who would be another Felipe even more loved? I would wish to have a son in order to know how you could love your lover more than he is, in another himself. My park, the château, seem to me deserted and cold. A woman without children is a monstrosity; we are only made to be mothers. Oh! doctor in a corset that you are, you have truly seen life. Barrenness, moreover, is horrible in everything. My life resembles a little too much

those pastorals of Gessner and of Florian, in which Rivarol said that wolves were wanted. I wish to be devoted also, I! I am conscious in myself of forces which Felipe neglects; and, if I am not a mother, it will be necessary that I should be satisfied with the fancy of some unhappiness. This is what I have said to my scion of the Moors, for whom these words brought tears to his eyes; he was let off by being called a sublime animal, you cannot jest with him on his love.

At moments I am taken with a desire to do some novenas, to go and ask for fruitfulness of certain Madonnas or of certain waters. Next winter I will consult the physicians. I am too furious against myself to say more about it. Adieu.

XLIV

THE SAME TO THE SAME

Paris, 1829.

How, my dear, a year without any letter?—I am a little vexed. Do you think that your Louis, who comes to see me almost every other day, takes your place? It is not sufficient for me to know that you are not sick and that your affairs are all going well; I wish to have your sentiments and your ideas as I send you mine, at the risk of being scolded, or blamed, or misunderstood, for I love you. Your silence and your retreat in the country, when you could enjoy here the parliamentary triumph of the

Comte de l'Estorade, whose gift of speech and whose devotion have acquired for him an influence, and who doubtless will fill a very high position after the session, fills me with grave disquietude.

Are you then passing your life in writing instructions to him? Numa was not so far from his Egeria. Why have you not seized the occasion to see Paris? I should have been enjoying you for the last four months. Louis said to me yesterday that you would come to get him and to have your third child in Paris, frightful mother Gigone that you are! After many questions, exclamations and complaints, Louis, diplomat though he is, ended by telling me that his great-uncle, the godfather of Athénaïs, was very ill. Now, I suppose you capable, as a good mother of a family, of making use of the glory and of the discourses of the deputy to obtain a desirable legacy from the last maternal relative of your husband. You may rest easy, my Renée, the Lenoncourts, the Chaulieus, the salon of Madame de Macumer, are working for Louis. Martignac will put him without doubt in the Cour des Comptes. But, if you do not tell me why you remain in the provinces, I shall be vexed. Is it so as not to have the air of being in yourself all the politics of the house of De l'Estorade? is it for the inheritance of the uncle? are you afraid of being less a mother in Paris? Oh! how I should like to know if it is to prevent your being seen for the first time in your state of pregnancy, coquette! Adieu.

XLV

RENÉE TO LOUISE

You complain of my silence, you forget then these two little brown heads which I govern and which govern me? You have, moreover, found some of the reasons which I have for keeping the house. Not to consider the condition of our precious uncle, I have not wished to drag to Paris a boy of about four years and a little girl of nearly three, while I am still enceinte. I have not wished to embarrass your life and your house with such a household, I have not wished to appear to my disadvantage in the brilliant world where you reign, and I hold furnished apartments, the life of hotels, in horror. The great-uncle of Louis, on hearing of the nomination of his great-nephew, presented me with the half of his savings, two hundred thousand francs, to buy a house in Paris, and Louis is charged with finding one in your quarter. My mother gives me thirty thousand francs for the furniture. When I shall establish myself for the session in Paris, I shall go to my own house. Finally, I shall endeavor to be worthy of my dear sister of election, be it said without playing on words.

I thank you for having placed Louis as well at Court as he is; but, notwithstanding the esteem in which he is held by Messieurs Bourmont and De Polignac, who wish to have him in their ministry, I

do not wish him at all to be so prominent,—one is then too much compromised. I prefer the Cour des Comptes because of its permanency. Our affairs here are in very good hands and when once our superintendent has got things well in shape, I will come to second Louis, you may be sure.

As to writing long letters now, can I do it? This one, in which I would wish to depict for you the ordinary events of my days, will remain on my table for a week. Perhaps Armand will make of it little paper cocks for his regiments drawn up on my carpet, or ships for the fleets which navigate in his bath. One of my days will be sufficient for you, moreover, they are all alike and they reduce themselves to two events,—the children are sick or the children are not sick. Literally, for me in this solitary country house, the minutes are hours or the hours are minutes, according to the state the children are in. If I have some delicious hours, it is during their sleep, when I am not rocking one and telling stories to the other to put them to sleep. When I have them both asleep near me, I say to myself: —"I have nothing more to fear."

In fact, my dear, during the daytime all mothers invent dangers as soon as the children are no longer under their eyes. It is some stolen razors with which Armand wished to play, the fire which kindles his jacket, a snake which may bite him, a fall while running which may cause an abscess in his head, or fountain basins, in which he may drown himself. As you see, maternity includes a series

of poesies sweet or terrible. Not an hour which has not its joys and its fears. But, in the evening in my chamber, comes the hour of waking dreams during which I arrange their destinies. Their life is then lit up by the smile of the angels which I see at their bedside. Sometimes Armand calls me in his sleep, I come to kiss unknown to him his forehead or the feet of his sister, contemplating them both in their beauty. These are my festivals! Yesterday, our guardian angel, I think, made me go in the middle of the night in great apprehension to the cradle of Athénaïs who had her head too low, and I found our Armand all uncovered, his feet blue with cold.

"Oh! little mother!" he said to me waking and embracing me.

This is, my dear, a scene of the night.

How useful it is to a mother to have her children at her side! Is there any nurse, however good she may be, who can take them, reassure them and put them to sleep again when some horrible nightmare has awakened them? for they have their dreams, —and to explain to them one of these terrible dreams is a task so much the more difficult that a child listens to its mother then with an eye at once sleepy, frightened, intelligent and silly. It is a difficult and elegant point of music executed between two sleeps. Thus my sleep has become so light that I see my two little ones and hear them through the gauze of my eyelids. I awake at a sigh, at a movement. The monster of the convulsions is for me forever crouched at the foot of their beds.

In the morning, the prattle of my two children commences with the first songs of the birds. Through the veils of their last sleep, their gibberish resembles the chirpings of the morning, the disputes of the swallows, little cries joyful or plaintive, which I hear less with the ears than with the heart. While Nais endeavors to reach me by undertaking the journey from her cradle to my bed, drawing herself by her hands and making uncertain steps, Armand climbs with the skill of a monkey and embraces me. These two little ones make then of my bed the theatre of their plays, where the mother is at their discretion. The little one pulls my hair, always wants to nurse, and Armand defends my breast as if it were his personal property. I do not resist certain attitudes, little laughs which go off like rockets and which end by driving away all sleep. Then there is the play of the ogress, and mother ogress devours with caresses this young flesh, so bright and so soft; she kisses outrageously those eyes so coquettish in their malice, those rosy shoulders, and little jealousies are excited which are charming. There are days in which I endeavor to put on my stockings at eight o'clock and when I have not yet got one on at nine o'clock.

Finally, my dear, everyone gets up. The toilets commence. I put on my dressing-gown,—I roll up my sleeves, and put on an oil-cloth apron; I bathe and cleanse then my two little flowers, assisted by Mary. I alone, I am the judge of the degree of heat or of the tepidness of the water, for the temperature

of the baths to me counts for the half in the cries, in the tears of the children. Then there come up paper fleets, little ducks in glass. It is necessary to amuse the children in order to be able to clean them well. If you knew all that it was necessary to invent in the way of pleasures for these absolute kings in order to be able to pass soft sponges into the least corners, you would be frightened at the address and the wit which are required to fulfill gloriously the duty of a mother. You supplicate, you scold, you promise, you practise a humbugging all the more superior that it has to be admirably concealed. One would not know how to succeed if to the shrewdness of the child God had not opposed the shrewdness of the mother. An infant is a great politician, of whom one secures the mastery as of the great politician—by his passions. Happily, these angels laugh at everything,—a brush which falls, a cake of soap which slips, then there are outbursts of joy! Finally, if the triumphs are dearly purchased, there are at least triumphs. But God alone, for the father himself knows nothing of this, God, yourself or the angels, you alone could then comprehend the looks which I exchange with Mary when, after having finished dressing our two little creatures we see them clean in the midst of the soaps, the sponges, the combs, the basins, the blotting-paper, the flannels, the thousand details of a veritable *nursery*. I have become English in this regard, I am convinced that the women of that country have the genius of *nursing*. Although they

consider the infant only from the point of view of material and physical well-being, they are justified in their improvements. Thus my children will always have their feet in flannel and their legs naked. They will be neither bandaged nor compressed, but also they will never be alone. The confinement of the French child in his little bandages means the freedom of the nurse, this is the whole truth. A true mother is not free,—this is why I do not write to you, having on my hands the administration of the domain and two children to bring up. The science of the mother requires silent merits unknown of all, without parade, a virtue in detail, a devotion of every hour. It is necessary to keep a watch on the soups which are making before the fire. Do you think me the woman to neglect a duty? In the least care there is affection to be gathered. Oh! it is so pretty, the smile of an infant who finds his little repast excellent. Armand has small shakings of the head which are worth a whole life of love. How leave to another woman the right, the care, the pleasure, to blow on a spoonful of soup which Naïs would find too hot, she whom I weaned seven months ago and who is still always thinking of the breast? When the nurse has burned the tongue and the lips of a child with something too hot she says to the mother who comes hastily that it is hunger which made it cry. But how can a mother sleep in peace with the thought that impure breaths can pass over the spoonfuls swallowed by her child, she to whom

nature has not permitted to have any intermediary between her breast and the lips of her nursling! To cut up the cutlet of Naïs who is getting her last teeth and to mix this meat, cooked just to the right turn, with the potatoes, is a work of patience, and truly there is no one but a mother who would know how in certain cases to cause the entire meal to be eaten by a child who is impatient. Neither numerous domestics nor an English nurse can then dispense for a mother with the duty of being personally present on the field of battle where gentleness should contend with the little griefs of childhood, with its sorrows. Truly, Louise, it is necessary to care for these dear innocents with the soul; it is necessary to believe only in one's eyes, only in the trial by hand for the toilet, for the nursing and for the putting to bed. This may be accepted as a principle, an infant's cry is an absolute demonstration of proof that the mother or the nurse is in the wrong when the cry is not occasioned by some natural suffering. Since I have two and will soon have three to take care of, I have nothing in my soul but my children; and yourself, whom I love so much, you are only in the state of a memory. I am not always completely dressed at two o'clock in the afternoon. Thus I have no faith in those mothers who have the apartments all in order and the collars, the dresses, everything, carefully put away. Yesterday, in the first days of April, the weather was fine, I wished to take them for a walk before my lying-in, the hour of which is at hand,—well, for a

mother, an excursion like this is a whole poem, and one promises it to one's self the evening before for the next day. Armand was to put on for the first time a jacket of black velvet, a new collarette which I had embroidered, a Scotch cap with the colors of the Stuarts and with cock feathers; Naïs was to go in white and pink with the delicious bonnets of the *babies,* for she is still a *baby;* she is going to lose this pretty name when the little one comes who is now giving me kicks and whom I call "my beggar," for he will be the youngest. I have already seen my child in a dream and know that I shall have a boy. Bonnets, collarettes, jackets, the little stockings, the fine shoes, the little pink bandages for the legs, the dress in muslin embroidered in designs in silk, everything was spread out on my bed. When these two little birds so gay, and who comprehend so well, had had their brown hair curled for one of them, prettily brought down on the forehead around the edges of the white and pink bonnet for the other; when the shoes had been fastened; when these little bare legs, these feet so well shod, had trotted about in the *nursery;* when these two faces *cleanes,* as Mary says in her limpid French; when these sparkling eyes said: "Let us go!" I palpitated. Oh! to see these children adorned by our own hands, to see their skin so fresh in which the blue veins shine; when one has bathed them, fomented them, sponged them one's self, set them off with the lively colors of velvet or of silk,—why it is better than a poem! With what passion, scarcely to be satisfied,

one calls them back to kiss again these necks which a simple collarette renders prettier than that of the most beautiful woman? Those pictures, before the most stupid colored lithographic copies of which all mothers stop to look, I, I make them every day!

Once out of doors, enjoying the result of my labors, admiring this little Armand who had the air of a son of a prince and who made the *baby* walk along that little road which you know, a carriage came up, I wished to draw them to one side, the two infants rolled in a mud puddle and there were my masterpieces ruined! It was necessary to bring them home again and put other clothes on them. I took my little one in my arms, without seeing that I ruined my dress, Mary took up Armand, and we came back in this condition. When *baby* cries and an infant is wet or soiled everything is said,—a mother no longer thinks of herself, she is absorbed.

When the dinner hour arrives, it most frequently happens that I have nothing done; and how can I suffice to serve them both, to put on the napkins, to roll up their sleeves and to make them eat? this is a problem which I solve twice a day. In the midst of these perpetual cares, of these fêtes or of these disasters, I am the only one forgotten in the house. It often happens to me to go in curl-papers all day when the children have been naughty. My toilet depends upon their humor. To have a moment to myself, in order to write you these six pages, it is necessary that they should cut up the pictures in my novels, that they should build houses with

books, with chess-men or with mother-of-pearl counters; that Naïs should take to pieces my silks or my woolens in her own manner, which, I assure you, is so complicated that she brings all her little intelligence to the work and does not utter a word.

After all, I have nothing to complain of,—my two children are strong, free, and they amuse themselves at less expense than would be thought. They are happy with everything, they require rather a freedom that is watched over than playthings. Some red, yellow, blue or black pebbles, little shells, the wonders of the sand, make all their happiness. To possess a great many little things, that is their riches. I watch Armand, he talks to the flowers, to the flies, to the chickens, he imitates them; he comes to an understanding with the insects, which fill him with admiration. Everything which is little interests him. Armand commences to ask the *why* of everything; he has just come to see what I was saying to his godmother; he takes you moreover for a fairy,—you see how the children are always right!

Alas! my angel, I do not wish to sadden you by relating to you these happinesses. This may serve to describe to you your godson. The other day a poor man followed us, for the poor know that no mother accompanied by her child will ever refuse a charity. Armand does not yet know that one can want for bread, he is ignorant of what money is; but as he had just wanted a trumpet which I had bought for him, he offered it with a royal air to the old man, saying to him:

"Here, take this!"

"Will you let me keep it?" said the poor man to me.

What is there on the earth that can be put in the balance with the joys of such a moment?

"I also, madame, I have had children," said the old man to me, taking what I gave him without paying attention to it.

When I think that it will be necessary to put in a college a child like Armand, that I have only three years and a half more to keep him, I shudder. The Public Instruction will reap the flowers of this childhood blessed every hour, will *denaturalize* these graces and these adorable franknesses! They will cut off these pretty curls which I have so tended, washed and kissed! What will they do with the soul of Armand?

And you, what has become of you? You have said nothing to me of your life. Do you still love Felipe? for I am not anxious about the Saracen. Adieu; Naïs has just fallen down, and if I wished to continue, this letter would make a volume.

XLVI

MADAME DE MACUMER TO THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE

1829.

The newspapers will have informed you, my good and tender Renée, of the horrible misfortune

which has overwhelmed me; I was not able to write you a single word, I remained at his bedside for twenty days and nights, I received his last sigh, I closed his eyes, I watched over him piously with the priests and I repeated the prayers for the dead. I inflicted upon myself the chastisement of these frightful sorrows, and, nevertheless, in seeing on his serene lips the smile which he gave me before dying, I have not been able to believe that my love killed him! Finally, *he is no more,* and I, *I am!* To you who have known us both so well, what can I say more? everything is in those two phrases. Oh! if someone could say to me that he could be recalled to life, I would give my share of Heaven to hear this promise, for that would be to see him again!— And to hold him again, were it only for two seconds, that would be to breathe with the dagger no longer in the heart! Will you not come to me very soon and tell me this? do you not love me enough to deceive me?—But no! you said to me in the beginning that I would wound him deeply—. Is it true? No, I did not deserve his love, you were right, I stole it. Happiness, I strangled it in my frantic embraces! Oh! as I am writing to you, I am no longer mad, but I feel that I am alone! Lord, what is there more in Thy hell than this word.

When they raised me up, I took to the same bed, hoping to die, for there was only one door between us, I believed myself still strong enough to open it! But alas! I was too young, and after a convalescence of forty days, during which they nursed me

with a frightful art with all the inventions of a melancholy science, I found myself in the country, seated at my window in the midst of the beautiful flowers which he had had taken care of for me, enjoying that magnificent view over which his looks had so many times wandered, which he congratulated himself so much for having discovered, since it pleased me. Ah! dear, when the heart is dead the sorrow of changing places is indescribable. The damp earth of my garden made me shiver, the earth is like a great tomb and I thought I was walking on *him!* The first time I went out, I was afraid and remained motionless. It is indeed mournful to see *his* flowers without *him.*

My mother and my father are in Spain, you know my brothers, and you, you are compelled to remain in the country; but do not be uneasy—two angels have flown to me. The Duke and the Duchess of Soria, those two charming beings, hastened to their brother. The last night saw our three sorrows calm and silent around that bed on which was dying one of those men truly noble and truly grand, who are so rare, and who are then superior to us in all things. The patience of my Felipe was divine. The sight of his brother and of Marie for a moment refreshed his soul and soothed his pain.

"Dear," said he to me with the simplicity which he put in everything, "I was about to die forgetting to give to Fernand the barony of Macumer, it will be necessary to alter my will. My brother will forgive me, he who knows what it is to love!"

I owe my life to the cares of my brother-in-law and of his wife; they wish to take me with them to Spain!

Ah Renée, this disaster, to you only can I tell the extent of it. The consciousness of my faults overwhelms me, and it is a bitter consolation to confide them to you, poor unheeded Cassandra. I killed him by my unreasonable demands, by my unfounded jealousies, by my continual bickerings. My love was all the more terrible that we had the same exquisite sensitiveness, we spoke the same language, he comprehended everything admirably, and often my jesting, without my suspecting it, went to the bottom of his heart. You would not know how to imagine to what an extent this dear slave carried his obedience: I said to him sometimes to go away and to leave me alone, he went off without discussing a whim from which perhaps he suffered. Up to his last breath he blessed me, repeating to me that one morning only alone with me, was worth more to him than a long life with another loved woman, were it Marie Hérédia. I am weeping as I write these words to you.

Now, I rise at noon, I go to bed at seven o'clock in the evening, I sit at my meals a ridiculous length of time, I walk slowly, I remain an hour before a plant, I look at the leaves, I occupy myself with method and gravity concerning nothings, I adore shadows, the silence and the night; in short, I struggle with the hours and add them with a sombre pleasure to the past. The peacefulness of my park

is the only company which I wish; I find in everything in it the sublime images of my extinguished happiness, invisible for all, eloquent and living for me.

My sister-in-law threw herself into my arms one morning when I said to her:

"You are insupportable to me! The Spaniards have greater souls than we have!"

Ah! Renée, if I am not dead, it is that God doubtless proportions the sentiment of sorrow to the strength of the afflicted. It is only we women who should know the extent of our losses when we lose a love without any hypocrisy, a love which has been chosen, a durable passion, the pleasures of which satisfy at once nature and the soul. When shall we meet a man so full of fine qualities that we can love him without lowering ourselves? To meet him is the greatest happiness which can come to us, and we could not hope to meet him twice. Men truly strong and great, in whom virtue is hidden under a poetical feeling, whose souls possess a lofty charm, made to be adored, guard yourselves from loving, you will cause the unhappiness of the woman and your own! This is what I cry in the alleys of my forest! And no child of his! That inexhaustible love which smiled upon me always, which had only flowers and joys to pour upon me, that love was sterile. I am an accursed creature! Love pure and violent as it is when it is absolute, can it then be as unfruitful as aversion, in the same way that the extreme heat of the sand of the desert

and the extreme cold of the pole destroy all life? Is it necessary to marry a Louis de l'Estorade in order to have a family? Can God be jealous of love? I am raving.

I think that you are the only person whom I can suffer near me; come then, you alone should be with a Louise in mourning. What a horrible day was that on which I put on the widow's bonnet! When I saw myself in black, I fell in a chair and I wept till the night, and I am still weeping in speaking to you of that terrible moment. Farewell, writing to you fatigues me; I have too much of my thoughts, I do not longer wish to express them. Bring your chidren, you can nurse the last one here, I shall no longer be jealous—, *he* is here no longer, and it will give me pleasure to see my godson; for Felipe wished for a child who should resemble this little Armand. Do come, and take your share in my sorrows!

XLVII

RENÉE TO LOUISE

1829.

My dearest, when you hold this letter in your hands I shall not be far away, for I set out a few moments after having sent it to you. We shall be alone. Louis is obliged to remain in Provence because of the elections which are about to take place; he wishes to be re-elected, and there are already intrigues against him, set on foot by the Liberals.

I am not coming to console you, I am only bringing you my heart to keep company with yours and to aid you to live. I am coming to command you to weep: it is necessary to purchase thus the happiness of rejoining him some day, for he is only journeying toward God; you will not take one step the more which will not conduct you toward him. Each duty accomplished will break one link of the chain which separates you. Come, my Louise, you will raise yourself again in my arms and you will go to him pure, noble, forgiven for your involuntary faults, and accompanied by the works which you will do here below in his name.

I trace these lines hastily in the midst of my preparations, of my children, and of Armand who cries to me: "Godmother! Godmother! let us go to see her!" in a way to render me jealous, he is almost your son!

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LOUISE AND HER ARCHITECT

When, day before yesterday, I went to see if my last fancies had been comprehended, I felt the tears come into my eyes, and I endorsed on the architect's statement, to his very great surprise, To be paid.

"*Your man of business will not pay this, Madame,*" *he said to me,* "*it is a question of three hundred thousand francs.*"

I added, Without dispute! *like a true Chaulieu of the seventeenth century.*

PART SECOND

XLVIII

THE BARONNE DE MACUMER TO THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE

October 15, 1833.

Well, yes, Renée, it is so, they have told you truly. I have sold my hôtel, I have sold Chantepleurs and the farms of Seine-et-Marne; but that I am crazy and ruined, that is an exaggeration. Let us count up! Everything included, there remained to me of the fortune of my poor Macumer about twelve hundred thousand francs. I am going to render you a faithful account, like a well brought up sister. I put a million in the three per cents, when they were at fifty francs, and I thus secured myself sixty thousand francs of income in the place of thirty which I had in lands. To go to spend six months of the year in the provinces, to draw up leases there, to listen there to the complaints of the farmers, who pay when they want to, to bore one's self there like a hunter in rainy weather, to have produce to sell and to dispose of it at a loss; to live in Paris in a hôtel which represents ten thousand

francs income, to place funds in the hands of the notaries, to wait for the interest, to be obliged to pursue people to get your repayments, to study the legislation on mortgages; in short, to have affairs in Nivernais, in Seine-et-Marne, in Paris, what a burden, what wearinesses, what erroneous accounts and what losses for a widow of twenty-seven! Now, my fortune is mortgaged on the budget. Instead of paying contributions to the State, I receive from it, myself, without deductions, thirty thousand francs every six months, at the Treasury, from a pretty little employé who gives me thirty notes of a thousand francs each and who smiles on seeing me. If France should go into bankruptcy? you will say to me. In the first place,

"I am not able to foresee misfortune so distant."

But France would then take away from me at the most the half of my revenue; I would still be as rich as I was before my investment; then, between now and the catastrophe, I would have received the double of my former revenue. As the catastrophe only happens from century to century, one has the time necessary to supply a capital by economizing. Finally, the Comte de l'Estorade, is he not a peer of the semi-republican France of July? one of the supporters of the crown offered by the *people* to the King of the French? Should I have any fears when I have for friend a president of the chamber of the Cour des Comptes, a great financier? Would

you dare to say that I was crazy? I calculate almost as well as your citizen king. Do you know what it is that can give this algebraic sagacity to a woman? Love! Alas! the moment has come to explain to you the mysteries of my conduct, the reasons for which would escape your perspicacity, your tender curiosity and your shrewdness. I am to be married secretly in a village near Paris. I love, I am loved. As much as a woman can love who knows well what love is, do I love. I am loved as much as a man should love the woman by whom he is adored. Forgive me, Renée, for having kept this secret from you, from all the world. If your Louise should deceive all eyes, should baffle all curiosities, admit that my passion for my poor Macumer rendered this deceit necessary. L'Estorade and you, you would have assassinated me with doubts, deafened me with remonstrances. Circumstances, moreover, would have come to your aid. You alone know to what an extent I am jealous, and you would have uselessly tormented me. That which you will call my folly, my Renée, I wish to carry it out myself in my head, in my heart, like the young girl who deceives the watchfulness of her parents. My lover has for his whole fortune thirty thousand francs of debts which I have paid. What a subject on which to make observations! You would have wished to prove to me that Gaston is an intriguer and your husband would have set spies on this child. I prefer to study him myself. It is now twenty-two months that he has been

courting me; I am twenty-seven years old, he is twenty-three. Between a woman and a man, this difference in the age is enormous. Another source of misfortune! Finally he is a poet, and lives by his work; that is enough to say to you that he lives on excessively little. This dear lizard of a poet is more often in the sun employed in building castles in Spain than in the shade of his den working on poems. Now, the writers, the artists, those who exist only for thoughts, are generally often enough taxed with inconstancy by the positive people. They espouse and conceive so many caprices that it is natural to believe that the head reacts on the heart. Notwithstanding the debts paid, notwithstanding the difference of ages, notwithstanding the poesy, after nine months of noble defense and without having permitted him to kiss my hand, after the most chaste and the most delicious love making, in a few days, I shall not deliver myself, as, eight years ago, inexperienced, ignorant and curious; I give myself, and am waited for with a so great submission that I could postpone my marriage for a year; but there is not the least servility in this,—there is servitude and not submission. Never was there to be met with a more noble heart, nor more spirit in the tenderness, nor more soul in the love, than in my intended. Alas! my angel, he is not wanting in relatives of some importance! You shall know his story in two words.

My friend has no other names than those of Marie Gaston. He is the son, not natural, but adulterine,

of that beautiful Lady Brandon of whom you have heard, and whom, through vengeance, Lady Dudley caused to die of grief; a horrible story of which this dear child is ignorant. Marie Gaston was placed by his brother, Louis Gaston, in the College of Tours, which he left in 1827. The brother went to sea a few days after having placed him there, going to seek his fortune, as he was told by an old woman who was his own peculiar providence. This brother, become a sailor, has written to him from time to time letters truly paternal, and which came from a fine soul; but he always remained abroad. In his last letter he announced to Marie Gaston his nomination to the grade of captain of a vessel in some remote American Republic, bidding him hope. Alas! for the last three years, my poor lizard has received no more letters, and he loves this brother so much, that he wished to take ship to search for him. Our great writer, Daniel d'Arthez, prevented this folly and interested himself nobly in Marie Gaston, to whom he has often "given," as the poet says to me in his energetic language, "a bone and a kennel." In fact, you may judge the distress of this infant,—he believed that genius finds the most rapid road to fortune! is not that enough to make you laugh for twenty-four hours? From 1828 up to 1833 he then endeavored to make himself a name in letters and naturally he led the most frightful life of distresses, of hopes, of work and of privations that can be imagined. Led on by an excessive ambition and in spite of the good counsels of D'Arthez,

he succeeded only in constantly increasing the snowball of his debts. His name had commenced to be known when I met him in the house of the Marquise d'Espard. There, without his being aware of it, I felt myself sympathetically attracted toward him at first sight. How is it that he has not yet been loved? how is it that they have left him for me? Oh! he has genius and wit, heart and pride; the women are always frightened before these complete grandeurs. Did it not require a hundred victories to enable Josephine to perceive Napoléon in the little Bonaparte, her husband? The innocent creature believes that he knows how much I love him! Poor Gaston! he has no thought of it; but to you I am going to tell it, it is necessary that you should know it, for there is, Renée, something of the last will and testament in this letter. Meditate well on my words.

In this moment, I have the certainty of being loved as much as a woman can be loved on this earth, and I have faith in this adorable conjugal life to which I bring a love that I did not know.—Yes, I experience finally the pleasure of passion returned. That which all women ask to-day of love, marriage gives to me. I feel in myself for Gaston the adoration which I inspired in my poor Felipe! I am not my own mistress, I tremble before this child as the Abencerrage trembled before me. In short, I love more than I am loved; I am afraid of everything, I have the most ridiculous terrors, I am afraid to be forsaken, I tremble lest I should be old and ugly when Gaston will still be young and handsome, I

tremble lest I should not please him enough! However, I think that I possess the faculties, the devotion, the spirit necessary not to maintain, but to make greater this love far from the world and in solitude. If I should fail, if the magnificent poem of this secret love should have an end, what do I say, an end! if Gaston should love me one day less than the day before, if I should perceive it, Renée, know it, it is not with him, it is with myself that I shall have to settle. This would not be his fault, it would be mine. I know myself, I am more lover than mother. Thus I say it to you in advance, I should die even though I should have children. Before making this contract with myself, my Renée, I entreat you then, if this misfortune should overtake me, to be as a mother to my children, I shall have left them to you. Your fanaticism for duty, your precious qualities, your love for children, your tenderness for me, all that I know of you will render death less bitter to me, I dare not say sweet. This contract taken with myself adds an unspeakable terror to the solemnity of this marriage: thus I do not want any witnesses who know me; thus my marriage will be celebrated secretly. I can tremble at my ease, I shall not see in your dear eyes an anxiety, and I alone shall know that in signing a new marriage contract I may have signed my death-warrant.

I shall not return again to this compact made between myself and the self which I am going to become; I confide it to you that you may know the extent of your duties. I shall marry though with

my property separated from my husband's, and, while knowing that I am sufficiently rich to enable us to live comfortably, Gaston is ignorant of the amount of my fortune. In twenty-four hours I shall divide my fortune as I please. As I do not wish to have anything mortifying, I have caused twelve thousand francs' income to be put in his name; he will find them in his secretary the evening before our marriage; and if he does not accept them, I will suspend everything. It required the menace of not marrying him to obtain the right to pay his debts. I am tired with having written you these avowals; day after to-morrow I will tell you more, for I am obliged to go into the country to-morrow for the whole day.

October 20th.

These are the measures I have taken to hide my happiness, for I wished to avoid every possible opportunity for my jealousy. I am like that beautiful Italian princess who ran like a lioness to devour her love in some Swiss city, after having thrown herself on her prey like a lioness. Thus I only speak to you of my arrangements in order to ask of you another favor, that of never coming to see us unless I have asked you myself, and of respecting the solitude in which I wish to live.

I purchased, two years ago, above the ponds of Ville-d'Avray, on the road to Versailles, some twenty acres of meadows, a strip of woodland and a fine little fruit garden. At the end of the meadows,

the ground has been excavated in such a manner as to obtain a pond of about three acres in extent, in the midst of which has been left a prettily contrived island. The two pretty wooded hills which enclose this little valley distil ravishing little streams which flow through my park, where they have been knowingly distributed by my architect. These streams fall into the ponds of the crown, glimpses of which may be caught in the distance. This little park, admirably well designed by this architect, is, according to the nature of the ground, surrounded by hedges, by walls, by deep ditches, so that no point of view is lost. Half-way up the hill, flanked by the woods of the Ronce, in a delightful situation and before a meadow which slopes down to the pond, I have had constructed a chalet, the exterior of which is in every point similar to that which the travelers admire on the road from Sion to Brigg, and which so seduced me on my return from Italy. In the interior, its elegance surpasses that of the most illustrious chalets. At a hundred steps from this rustic habitation a charming house which constitutes an extension communicates with the chalet by an underground passage-way and contains the kitchen, the servants' rooms, the stables, and the carriage-houses. Of all these constructions in brick, the eye sees only a façade of a graceful simplicity and surrounded by shrubbery. The lodging of the gardeners constitutes another structure and masks the entrance to the orchards and the kitchen gardens.

The gate of this property, hidden in the wall which encloses it on the side of the woods, is almost unfindable. The trees and shrubs planted, which are already large, will completely conceal the houses in two or three years. The pedestrian will only guess at our habitation in seeing the smoke of the chimneys from the tops of the hills, or in the winter when the leaves have fallen.

My chalet is constructed in the middle of a landscape copied from that which is called the garden of the king at Versailles, but it has a view of my pond and my island. On all sides, the hills show their masses of foliage, their fine trees so well cared for by your new civil list. My gardeners have orders to cultivate around me only odoriferous flowers and those by thousands, so that this corner of the earth is a perfumed emerald. The chalet, ornamented with a creeping vine which runs over the roof, is literally enclosed in creeping plants, in hop vines, clematis, jessamine, azalea, cobæa. Whoever can distinguish our windows may boast that he has good eyesight!

This chalet, my dear, is a good and complete house, with its heater and all the furnishings which modern architecture has introduced, which constructs palaces in a hundred feet square. It contains an apartment for Gaston and an apartment for myself. The ground-floor is taken for an antechamber, a parlor and a dining-room. Above us are three chambers, for the *nursery*. I have five fine horses, a little light coupé and a *milord* for two

horses; for we are within forty minutes of Paris: when it shall please us to go to the opera, to see a new play, we can set out after dinner and return in the evening to our nest. The road is very good and passes under the shadows of our enclosing hedge. My people, my cook, my coachman, the groom, the gardeners, my femme de chambre, are perfectly honest persons whom I have been seeking for these last six months and who will all be under the orders of my old Philippe. Although certain of their attachment and of their discretion, I retain them by their interests; they will have small wages, but which will be increased each year by the amount which we give them on New Year's day. All of them know that the slightest fault, a suspicion of their discretion, may cause them to lose immense advantages. Lovers never worry their servants, they are indulgent by character,—thus I may count upon our people.

Everything that there is precious, pretty and elegant in my house at the Rue du Bac is found in the chalet. The Rembrandt is hung on the stairway neither more nor less than if it were a daub; the Hobbema is in *his* study, opposite the Rubens; the Titian, which my sister-in-law, Marie, sent me from Madrid, ornaments the boudoir; the handsome furniture found by Felipe is well placed in the parlor, which the architect has delightfully decorated. Everything in the chalet is of an admirable simplicity, of that simplicity which costs a hundred thousand francs. Constructed over cellars in porous

stone laid in cement, our ground-floor, scarcely visible under the flowers and the shrubbery, enjoys an adorable freshness without the least dampness. Finally, a fleet of white swans sails on the pond.

Oh, Renée, there reigns in this valley a silence which would rejoice the dead! One is awakened by the song of the birds or by the murmuring of the breeze in the poplars. A little stream found by the architect in digging the foundations of the wall flows down the hill on the side of the woods, over silvery sand toward the pond between two banks of watercress: I do not know that any sum of money would pay for it. Will Gaston not conceive a hatred for this happiness too complete? Everything is so beautiful that I shudder; the worms take up their lodging in the fine fruit, the insects attack the magnificent flowers. Is it not always the pride of the forest which is ravaged by that horrible brown larva, the voracity of which resembles that of death? I know already that an invisible and jealous power attacks the complete felicities. It is long ago that you wrote me so, moreover, and you proved to be a prophet.

When, day before yesterday, I went to see if my last fancies had been comprehended, I felt the tears come into my eyes, and I endorsed on the architect's statement, to his very great surprise, *To be paid.*

"Your man of business will not pay this, Madame," he said to me, "it is a question of three hundred thousand francs."

I added, *Without dispute!* like a true Chaulieu of the seventeenth century.

"But, monsieur," I said to him, "I add a condition to my gratitude,—do not speak of these buildings and of the park to any one. No one is to know the name of the proprietor, promise me on your honor to observe this clause of my payment."

Do you now comprehend the reason of my sudden journeyings, of the secret comings and goings? Do you see where are to be found those beautiful things that were thought to be sold? Do you seize the great reason for the change of my fortune? My dear, love is a great affair, and who wishes to love well should not have any other. Money will no longer be a care for me; I have rendered life easy, and I have been the mistress of the house so thoroughly once that I shall not have to attend to it again except for ten minutes each morning with my old major-domo Philippe. I have carefully observed life and its dangerous windings; death one day gave me some cruel instructions, and I wish to profit by them. My only occupation will be to please *him* and to love him, to throw some variety into what would appear so monotonous to common beings.

Gaston knows nothing as yet. At my request, he has, like myself, taken a lodging in Ville-d'Avray; we depart to-morrow for the chalet. Our life there will be the least costly; but if I should tell you what sum I propose to spend on my toilet, you would say and with reason: "she is crazy!" I wish to adorn myself for him every day, as women

are in the habit of adorning themselves for the world. My toilet for the country for the whole year will cost twenty-four thousand francs, and that for the day is not the dearest. He can wear a blouse, if he wants to! Do not think that I wish to make of this life a duel and exhaust myself in combinations to entertain love: I wish to have no reproach to make to myself, that is all. I have thirteen years in which to be a pretty woman, I wish to be loved the last day of the thirteenth year even more than I shall be the morning after my mysterious wedding. This time, I shall be always humble, always grateful, without any caustic speech; and I shall make myself a servant, since commanding ruined me the first time. Oh! Renée, if, like myself, Gaston has comprehended the infinitude of love, I am certain of living always happy. Nature is very beautiful around the chalet, the forests are ravishing. At each step, the freshest landscapes, the points of wooded view give pleasure to the soul by calling up charming ideas. These forests are full of love. Provided that I have done something else than prepare for myself a magnificent funeral pile! Day after to-morrow I shall be Madame Gaston. My God, I ask myself if it is really Christian to love a man so much.

"Well, it is legal," said to me my man of affairs, who is one of my witnesses, and who, finally seeing the object of the liquidation of my fortune, exclaimed: "I am losing a client by it!"

Thou, my beautiful lamb, I dare no longer say

beloved, thou mayst say: "I am losing a sister by it."

My angel, address henceforth Madame Gaston, Poste Restante, Versailles. Our letters will be collected there every day. I do not wish that we should be known in the country round. All our provisions will be brought from Paris. Thus I hope to be able to live mysteriously. Within the last year while this retreat was in preparation, no one was seen there, and the property was acquired during the movements which followed the Revolution of July. The only being who showed himself in the country was my architect,—no one was known but he, and he will return no more. Adieu. In writing this word, I feel in my heart as much pain as pleasure: is this not to regret you as completely as I love Gaston?

XLIX

MARIE GASTON TO DANIEL D'ARTHEZ

October, 1833.

My dear Daniel, I have need of two witnesses for my marriage; I ask you to come to my house tomorrow evening bringing with you our friend, the good and grand Joseph Bridau. It is the intention of the lady who will be my wife to live far from the world and perfectly unknown,—she has foreseen the very dearest of my wishes. You have known nothing of my love affairs, you who have softened for me the miseries of poverty; but, you will understand

it, this absolute secret was a necessity. This is the reason that, for the last year, we have seen so little of each other. The day after my marriage, we shall be separated for a long time. Daniel, you have the soul that can comprehend me: friendship will subsist without the friend. Perhaps I shall sometimes have need of you, but I shall not see you, in my house at least. *She* has again anticipated our wishes in this. She has made for me a sacrifice of her friendship for a friend of her childhood who is for her a true sister; I should immolate my friend for her. That which I say to you here will doubtless enable you to divine, not a passion, but a love entire, complete, divine, founded on an intimate knowledge between the two beings who thus unite themselves. My happiness is pure, infinite; but as there is a secret law which forbids us to have an unmixed happiness, at the bottom of my soul, and buried in the last fold, I hide a thought by which I alone am affected, and of which she is ignorant. You have too often aided my constant poverty to be ignorant of the horrible situation in which I was. Whence did I draw the courage to live when hope extinguished herself so often? In your past, my friend, in whom I found so many consolations and delicate succors. Finally, dear friend, my crushing debts, she has paid them. She is rich, and I have nothing. How many times have I not said in my accessions of idleness: "Ah! if some rich woman would only take a fancy to me!" Well, in presence of the actual fact, the jests of careless youth, the

deliberate choice of the unscrupulous unhappy, everything has disappeared. I am humiliated, despite the most ingenious tenderness. I am humiliated, despite the certainty thus acquired of the nobleness of her soul. I am humiliated, even while knowing that my humiliation is a proof of my love. In short, she has seen that I should not recoil before this abasement. There is a point where far from being the protector, I am the protected. This sorrow I confide to you. Outside of this point, my dear Daniel, the least things fulfill my dreams. I have found the beautiful without spot, the good without defect. In short, as is said, the bride is too beautiful,—she has spirit in her tenderness, she has that charm and that grace which import variety into love, she is educated and understands everything; she is pretty, blonde, slender, and slightly plump, as if Raphael and Rubens had come to an understanding between them to compose a woman! I do not know if it would ever have been possible for me to have loved a brunette as much as a blonde,—it has always seemed to me that the brunette was a spoiled boy. She is a widow, she never had any children, she is twenty-seven years old. Although lively, alert and indefatigable she is yet so constituted as to take pleasure in the meditations of melancholy. These marvelous gifts do not exclude in her either dignity or nobility: her character is imposing. Although she belongs to one of the old families the most tainted with pride of birth, she loves me enough to pass over the misfortunes

of my origin. Our secret love has lasted for a long time; we have proved each other; we are equally jealous: our thoughts may well be said to be two claps of the same thunder. Both of us love for the first time, and this delicious springtime has enclosed in its joys all those scenes which imagination has decorated with its most smiling, its sweetest, its most profound conceptions. Sentiment has displayed lavishly for us all its flowers. Every one of these days has been full, and when we separated, we wrote to each other poems. It has never occurred to me to tarnish this brilliant season by a desire, although my soul was ceaselessly troubled by it. She is a widow and free, she comprehended marvelously all the flatteries of this constant restraint; she has often been touched by it to the point of tears. You will have a glimpse then, my dear Daniel, of a creature truly superior. There has not even passed between us the first kiss of love, we were afraid of each other.

"We have," she said to me, "each one a misfortune with which to reproach ourselves."

"I do not see yours."

"My marriage," she replied.

You who are a great man and who love one of the most extraordinary women of this aristocracy in which I have found my Armande, this word alone will suffice to enable you to understand this soul and how great will be the happiness of

Your friend,

MARIE GASTON.

L

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER

What, Louise, after all the close sorrows which came to you from a partaken passion, in the very bosom of marriage, you are going to live with a husband in solitude? After having killed one while living in the world, you wish to go into retreat to devour another? What griefs are you preparing for yourself! But, from the manner in which you have gone into it, I see that it is quite irrevocable. A man who has been able to overcome your aversion to a second marriage must possess an angelic spirit, a divine heart; it is necessary then to leave you to your illusions; but have you then forgotten what you have said of men's youthful days, who have all of them known ignoble localities, and whose candor has been lost in the most horrible public places on the road? Who has changed? you or they? You are very happy to be able to believe in happiness: I have not the strength to blame you, although the instinct of tenderness urges me to turn you from this marriage. Yes, a hundred times yes, nature and society combine to destroy the existence of entire felicities, because they run counter to nature and to society, because heaven is perhaps jealous of its rights. In short, my friendship foresees some unhappiness which no foresight could explain to me, —I do not know whence it will come, nor what will give rise to it; but, my dear, an immense and

boundless happiness will doubtless overwhelm you in the end. An excessive joy is supported with even less facility than the heaviest pain. I do not say anything against him: you love him, and I have doubtless never seen him; but you will write to me I hope, on one of your idle days, some kind of a portrait of this fine and curious animal.

You see me taking my part gaily, for I feel a certainty that, after the honeymoon, you will do, both of you and with a common accord, like the rest of the world. Some day, two years from now, on our promenades, while passing along this road, you will say to me: "See, there is the chalet from which I was never going to come out!" And you will laugh with your fine laugh, showing your beautiful teeth. I have said nothing about it as yet to Louis, we should have given him too much matter for laughter. I will inform him only of your marriage and of your desire to keep it secret. You have unfortunately no need of mother or sister to put the bride to bed. We are in October, you are commencing with the winter, like a courageous woman. If it were not a question of marriage, I would say that you were taking the bull by the horns. Finally, you will have in me the most discreet and the most intelligent of friends. The mysterious centre of Africa has devoured many travelers, and it seems to me that you are throwing yourself, in matters of sentiment, into a journey similar to those in which so many explorers have perished, either by the negroes or in the deserts. Your desert is

at two leagues from Paris, I can then say to you cheerfully: *Bon voyage!* we shall see each other again.

LI

THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME MARIE GASTON

1835.

What has become of you, my dear? After a silence of two years it is permitted to Renée to be anxious about Louise. This then is love! it carries away, it annuls a friendship like ours. Admit that, if I adore my children even more than you love your Gaston, there is in the maternal sentiment an unfathomable immensity which permits that nothing should be taken from other affections, and which leaves a wife still a sincere and devoted friend. Your letters, your sweet and charming face, are missing for me. I am reduced to conjectures about you, oh Louise!

As to ourselves, I will explain things to you in the briefest possible manner.

In reading over your last letter but one, I found some keen words on our political situation. You rallied us for having kept the place of president of the chamber at the Cour des Comptes, which we held, as well as the title of count, through the favor of Charles X.; but is it with forty thousand francs income, of which thirty belong to a majorat, that I could comfortably establish Athénaïs and this poor

little beggar of a René? Should we not get our living from our office, and wisely accumulate the revenue on our lands? In twenty years we shall have accumulated about six hundred thousand francs, which will serve to provide for my daughter and René, whom I destine for the navy. My poor little one will have ten thousand francs income, and perhaps we may be able to leave him in money a sum which will render his share equal to that of his sister. When he becomes captain of a vessel, my beggar shall marry a rich wife, and he will hold in the world a rank equal to that of his elder brother.

These sage calculations have determined in our household the acceptance of the new order of things. Naturally, the new dynasty made Louis peer of France and grand officer of the Legion of Honor. From the moment when L'Estorade took the oath, he could do nothing by half; from that date he rendered great services in the Chamber. Now he has arrived at a situation in which he may rest peacefully until the end of his days. He is dexterous in the management of public affairs; he is rather an agreeable speaker than an orator, but this is sufficient for what we ask in politics. His shrewdness, his knowledge both in government and in administration are appreciated and all parties consider him an indispensable man, I may say to you that he has been lately offered an embassy, but I caused him to refuse it. The education of Armand who is now thirteen years old, that of Athénaïs who is going on

toward eleven, detain me in Paris, and I wish to remain here until my little René has finished his, which is now commencing.

To have remained faithful to the Elder Branch and to return to the estates, it would have been necessary not to have had to raise and to provide for three children. A mother should, my angel, not be a Decius, above all at a time when the Decia are rare. In fifteen years from now, L'Estorade will be able to retire to La Crampade with a good pension, in installing Armand at the Cour des Comptes where he will leave him referendary. As to René, the navy will doubtless make him a diplomat. At the age of seven this little boy is already as keen as an old cardinal.

Ah! Louise, I am a very happy mother! My children continue to give me joys without number. —*Senza brama sicura richezza.*—Armand is in the Henry Fourth College, I decided for a public education without being able, nevertheless, to separate myself from him, and I have done as the Duc d'Orléans did before being, and perhaps in order to become, Louis-Philippe. Every morning Lucas, that old servant whom you know, takes Armand to the college at the hour of the first classes, and brings him back to me at half-past four. An old and learned tutor who lives in my house, makes him study in the evening and wakes him in the morning at the hour at which the collegians rise. Lucas carries him a lunch at noon, during the recess. Thus I see him at dinner, in the evening before he

goes to bed, and I assist at his departure in the morning. Armand is still the charming child, affectionate and devoted, whom you love; his tutor is well pleased with him. I have my Nais with me and the little one who buzzes unceasingly, but I am as much of a child as they. I have not been able to bring myself to resolve to lose the sweetness of the caresses of my dear infants. To be able to run, as often as I desire, to Armand's bed, to see him asleep, to go to take, to ask, or to receive a kiss from this angel, is for me a necessity of my life.

Nevertheless, this system of keeping children in the paternal household has its inconveniences, and I have thoroughly recognized them. Society, like nature, is jealous, and never permits any encroachment upon its laws; it does not suffer any one to derange its economy. Thus in the families in which the children are kept at home, they are too soon exposed to the distractions of the world, they see its passions, they study its dissimulations. Incapable of divining the distinctions which regulate the conduct of accomplished people, they measure the world by their sentiments, their passions, instead of submitting their desires and their requirements to the world; they adopt the false glitter, which shines more than the solid virtues, for it is above all specious appearances which the world puts forward and with which it clothes deceitful forms. When, at the age of fifteen, a child has the self-assurance of a man who knows the world, he is a monstrosity, becomes an old man at twenty-five, and renders

himself by this precocious science unfit for the solid studies on which real and serious talents are based. The world is a great comedian; and, like the comedian, it receives and sends back everything, it retains nothing. A mother should then, in keeping her children about her, take the firm resolution to prevent them from penetrating into the world, should have the courage to oppose both their desires and her own, not to show them. Cornelia should lock up her jewels. Thus will I do, for my children are my whole life.

I am thirty years old, the greatest heat of the day is past, the most difficult part of the road traversed. In a few years I shall be an old woman, thus I shall draw an immense strength from the consciousness of duties accomplished. One would say that these three little beings know my thought and conform themselves to it. There exist between them, who have never left me, and myself, mysterious relations. In short, they overwhelm me with enjoyment, as though they knew all that they owe me for indemnification.

Armand, who during the first three years of his studies was dull, thoughtful, and who filled me with anxieties, has suddenly taken a fresh start. Doubtless he has comprehended the object of these preparatory labors which children do not always perceive, and which is to accustom them to work, to sharpen their intelligence and to accustom them to obedience, the principle of all society. My dear, a few days ago, I had the intoxicating sensation

of seeing Armand crowned in the general competition, in full gathering at Sorbonne. Your godson received the first prize for translation. At the distribution of the prizes of the Henry Fourth College he obtained two first prizes, that for verses and that for a theme. I turned pale when I heard his name proclaimed, and I had a great desire to cry out: *"I am his mother!"* Naïs grasped my hand so tightly as to hurt, if one could feel pain in such a moment. Ah! Louise, this fête is worth a great many lost loves.

The triumphs of the brother have stimulated my little René, who wants to go to the college like his elder brother. Sometimes these three infants cry, make a disturbance in the house and a noise to drive one to distraction. I do not know how I resist it, for I am always with them; I have never trusted to anyone, not even to Mary, the care of my children. But there are so many joys to gather in this beautiful avocation of a mother! To see an infant leave his play to come to embrace me as if driven by a need—what joy! Then one observes them so much the better. One of the duties of a mother is to distinguish from the earliest ages the aptitudes, the character, the vocation of her children, that which no pedagogue would know how to do. All children brought up by their mother have experience and good breeding, two acquisitions which supplement the natural intelligence, whilst the natural intelligence never supplements that which men learn from their mothers. I recognize already these shades of

distinction among the men in the salons, in whom I distinguish almost immediately the traces of the woman in the manners of the young man. Why should one's children be deprived of such an advantage? As you see, my duties accomplished are fertile in treasures, in enjoyments.

Armand, I am certain of it, will be the most excellent magistrate, the most upright administrator, the most conscientious deputy that can ever be met with; whilst my René will be the most courageous, the most adventurous and at the same time the shrewdest sailor in the world. This little scamp has an iron will; he has all that he wishes for, he will take a thousand detours to arrive at his object and if the thousand do not bring him there, he will find a thousand and one. Where my dear Armand resigns himself with calmness while studying the reason of things, my René storms, sets his wits to work, combines, talking ceaselessly, and ends by discovering a joint; if he can slip in the blade of a knife, very soon he will have room to drive in his little carriage.

As to Naïs, she is so much myself, that I do not distinguish her flesh from my own. Ah, the darling, the beloved little girl whom I please myself by making coquettish, whose hair and whose curls I dress weaving in with them my thoughts of love, I wish her to be happy; she shall never be given but to one who will love her and whom she will love. But, my God! when I let her ornament herself, or when I tie red ribbons in her hair, when I shoe her

little feet so delicate, there leaps to my heart and to my head a thought which almost makes me faint. Can anyone govern her daughter's fate? Perhaps she will love a man unworthy of her, perhaps she will not be loved by him whom she loves. Often when I contemplate her the tears come into my eyes. To leave a charming creature, a flower, a rose, which has lived on our breast like a bud on a rose tree, and to give her to a man who ravishes everything from us! It is you who, in two years, have not written me these three words: "I am happy!" it is you who have recalled to me the drama of marriage, horrible for a mother who is as much of a mother as I am. Adieu, for I do not know why I am writing to you, you do not merit my friendship. Oh! answer me, my Louise.

LII

MADAME GASTON TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE

At the Chalet.

A silence of two years has piqued your curiosity, you ask me why I have not written to you; but, my dear Renée, there are no phrases, no words, no language, to express my happiness: our souls have the strength to sustain it, this is the whole truth in two words. We have not to make the slightest effort in order to be happy, we understand each other in everything. In two years there has not been the slightest dissonance in this concert, the

least discord of expression in our sentiments, the least difference in the least wishes. In short, my dear, there is not one of these thousand days which has not borne its peculiar fruit, not one moment which fancy has not rendered delightful. Not only will our life, we have the certainty of it, never be monotonous, but, still more, it will never perhaps be sufficiently extended to contain the poesies of our love, fruitful as nature, varied as she. No, not one mistake! We please each other still more than on the first day, and we discover from moment to moment new reasons for loving each other. We promise each other every evening in taking our promenade after dinner to go to Paris through curiosity, as you would say: "I am going to see Switzerland."

"What!" replies Gaston, "they are laying out such a boulevard, the Madeleine is completed. We must go and see that."

Bah! the next morning we remain in bed, we breakfast in our chamber; noon comes, it is warm, a little siesta is permitted; then he asks me to permit him to look at me, and he looks at me absolutely as if I were a picture; he loses himself in this contemplation, which, as you may imagine, is reciprocal. Tears then, fill our eyes, we think of our happiness and we tremble. I am always his mistress, that is to say that I appear to love less than I am loved. This deceiving is delicious. There is so much charm for us women to see feeling prevail over desire, to see the master, still timid,

halt there where we wish that he should remain! You have asked me to tell you what he is like; but, my Renée, it is impossible to draw the portrait of a man whom one loves, one would not know whether it was truthful or not. Then, between ourselves, let us admit without prudishness a singular and sorrowful result of our manners,—there is nothing so different as a man of the world from a man of love; the difference is so great that one can resemble the other in nothing. He who assumes the most graceful attitudes of the most graceful dancer in order to say to us at the corner of the fire, in the evening, a word of love, may have not one of the secret graces which a woman desires. On the contrary, a man who appears ugly, without manners, badly clothed in his black cloth, hides a lover who possesses the spirit of love, and who will not be ridiculous in any one of those positions in which we ourselves can perish with all our exterior graces. To discover in a man a mysterious accord between that which he appears to be and that which he is, to find among them one who in the secret life of marriage shall have that innate grace which is not given, which cannot be acquired, which the antique statuary has displayed in the voluptuous and chaste marriages of his statues, that innocence of abandonment which the ancients have put in their poems, and which in the undraped appears to have still more covering for the souls, all this ideal which springs from ourselves and which belongs to the world of harmony, which is doubtless the genius of things; in short,

this immense problem sought for by the imagination of all women, well, Gaston is of it the living solution. Ah! dear, I did not know what love, youth, wit and beauty in union were. My Gaston is never affected, his grace is instinctive, it develops itself without effort. When we walk alone in the woods, his hand passed around my waist, mine on his shoulder, his body close to mine, our heads touching each other, we proceed with an equal step, by a movement uniform and so gentle, so quite the same, that for those who should see us pass we would appear to be but one being, gliding over the gravel of the alleys like Homer's Immortals. This harmony is in the desire, in the thought, in the speech. Sometimes, under the foliage, still wet from a passing shower, when in the evening the grass is of a greenness made lustrous by the rain, we have taken entire walks without saying a single word to each other, listening to the sound of the drops which fell, enjoying the reddish colors which the setting sun displayed on the tops or reflected on the gray barks of the trees. Certainly our thoughts were then a secret, confused prayer, which mounted to Heaven as an excuse for our happiness. Sometimes we cried out together at the same moment, in seeing the end of an alley which turned suddenly, and which from a distance offered us delightful images. If you know what there is of honey and of profundity in a kiss almost timid given in the midst of this holy nature—it is to believe that God has made us only that we might pray thus. And we always returned

with increased mutual love. This love between two married people would seem an insult to society in Paris, it is necessary to deliver one's self up to it like the lovers in the depths of the forest.

Gaston, my dear, has that medium stature which has been that of all men of energy; he is neither fat nor lean, and is very well built; his proportions have a roundness; there is dexterity in all his movements, he leaps a ditch with the lightness of a wild beast. In whatever position he may be he has in him a sense which enables him to find his equilibrium, and this is rare among men who have the habit of meditation. Although a brunette, he is of a great whiteness. His hair is of a blackness like jet and offers vigorous contrasts with the dull whiteness of the tones of his neck and of his forehead. He has the melancholy head of Louis XIII. He has permitted his moustaches and his imperial to grow, but I have made him cut off his whiskers and his beard; they have become common. His holy poverty preserved him pure for me from all those stains which spoil so many young men. He has magnificent teeth, his health is like iron. The glance of his blue eye, so piercing, but for me of a magnetic softness, lights up and burns like a flame when his soul is agitated. Like all persons who are strong and of a powerful intelligence, he has an evenness of character which will surprise you as it has surprised me. I have heard many women confide to me the vexations of their household; but these variations of will, these disquietudes of men

discontented with themselves, who do not wish to or who do not know how to grow old, who experience unknown eternal reproaches for their mad youth, and whose veins are filled with poison, whose glance has always a depth of sadness, who have made themselves wilful in order to hide their suspicions, who will sell you an hour of tranquillity for evil mornings, who will revenge themselves on us for not being able to be amiable, and who conceive a secret hatred for our beauties,—all these miseries youth is not acquainted with, they are the attributes of disproportioned marriages. Oh! my dear, do not marry Athénaïs to any but a young man. If you knew how much I feast upon this constant smile which a fine and delicate spirit varies unceasingly, of this smile which speaks, which in the corners of the lips encloses thoughts of love, mute thankfulnesses, and which always unites past joys to the present ones! There is never anything forgotten between us. We have made of the least things of nature the accomplices of our felicities: everything is living, everything speaks to us of ourselves in this ravishing forest. A mossy old oak, near the house of the keeper on the road, tells us that we have seated ourselves fatigued in its shadow and that Gaston has explained to me the mosses which were at our feet, has related to me their history, and that, from these mosses, we have mounted from science to science, to the ends of the world. Our two spirits have something so fraternal, that I think that it is two editions of the same

work. As you see, I have become literary. We have both of us the habit or the gift of seeing each thing in its full extent, of perceiving all of it, and the proof that we are constantly giving each other of the purity of this interior sense is a pleasure always new. We have come to consider this understanding of the spirit as a witness of love; and, if ever it should be missing for us, it would be for us what an infidelity is for other households.

My life, full of pleasures, will appear to you, moreover, excessively laborious. In the first place, my dear, learn that Louise-Armande-Marie de Chaulieu takes care of her own chamber. I would never suffer that hired services, that a strange woman or maid should be initiated—literary woman!—into the secrets of my bedchamber. My religion embraces the least things necessary to its cult. It is not jealousy, but rather respect for one's self. Thus my chamber is arranged with the care which a young girl in love might take of her surroundings. I am as fastidious as an old maid. My dressing-room, instead of being topsy-turvy is a delicious boudoir. My cares have foreseen everything. The master, the sovereign, may enter it at any moment; his eyes will not be offended, astonished nor disenchanted,—flowers, perfumes, elegance, everything there charms the eye. While he is still sleeping in the morning, at daybreak, without his having yet suspected it, I arise, I pass into this cabinet where, rendered sage by my mother's experiences, I remove the traces of sleep

with lotions of cold water. Whilst we sleep, the skin, less excited, performs its functions sluggishly; it becomes warm, it has as it were a fog visible to the eyes of the flesh-worm, a sort of atmosphere. Under the streaming sponge a woman becomes a young girl. In this perhaps may be found the meaning of the myth of Venus issuing from the sea. The water thus gives the piquant graces of the morning; I comb myself, I perfume my hair; and after this careful toilet, I slip in again like a serpent, so that on his awakening the master finds me as fine as a spring morning. He is charmed with this freshness of the newly-blown flower, without being able to explain the reason. Later, the toilet for the day is an affair for my femme de chambre and takes place in a dressing-room. There is, as you may suppose, the toilet for retiring. Thus I make three of them for monsieur my husband, sometimes four; but this, my dear, relates to other myths of antiquity.

We have also our labors. We are much interested in our flowers, in the beautiful creatures of our greenhouse and in our trees. We are seriously botanists, we love flowers passionately, the chalet is encumbered with them. Our turfs are always green, our shrubberies are cared for like those of the gardens of the richest banker. So that nothing is as handsome as our enclosure. We are great gourmands concerning fruits, we superintend our peaches, our hotbeds, our espaliers, our fruit trees cut distaff-fashion. But if these rustic occupations

should not satisfy the mind of my adored, I have counseled him to finish in silence and in solitude some of those pieces for the theatre which he commenced during his days of poverty, and which are truly admirable. This species of labor is the only one in Letters which can be quitted and taken up again, for it demands long reflection, and does not exact the careful chiseling required by style. The dialogue cannot always be done, it requires for it outlines, résumés, sallies, which the mind produces as plants give their flowers, and which are found rather in waiting for them than in seeking them. This pursuit of ideas suits me. I am the collaborator of my Gaston, and thus never leave him, not even when he is traveling into the vast fields of the imagination. Can you guess now how I get through the winter evenings? Our service is so gentle, that we have not had since our marriage a word of reproach, not an observation to address to our servants. When they have been questioned about us, they have displayed a crafty spirit, they have passed us off for the lady companion and the secretary of their masters reputed to be traveling; confident of never meeting with the least refusal they never go out without asking permission; moreover, they are happy, and see clearly that their condition can be changed only by their own fault. We permit the gardeners to sell the surplus of our fruits and of our vegetables. The neatherd who has charge of the dairy does the same with the milk, the cream and the fresh butter. Only, the best of all these products

is reserved for our own use. These people are very well content with their profits, and we are enchanted with this abundance which no fortune could or would know how to procure in that terrible Paris, where the fine peaches cost, each one, the income from one hundred francs. All this, my dear, has a reason: I wish to be the world for Gaston; the world is amusing, my husband should then not weary himself in this solitude. I believed myself jealous when I was loved and when I let myself be loved; but I experience to-day the jealousy of the women who love, in short, the true jealousy. Thus, any one of his looks which seems to me indifferent makes me tremble. From time to time I say to myself: "If he should be going to love me no more—" and I shudder. Oh! I am indeed before him as the Christian soul is before God.

Alas, my Renée, I have still no children. A moment will come without doubt when the sentiments of the father and the mother will be required to animate this retreat, when we shall have need, both of us, of seeing the little dresses, pèlerines, little brown or blonde heads leaping, running through the shrubberies and our flowery paths. Oh! what a monstrosity are flowers without fruits. The memory of your beautiful family is poignant for me. My life, for myself, is restricted, whilst yours has enlarged, has radiated outward. Love is profoundly egotistical, whilst maternity tends to multiply our sentiments. I have deeply felt this difference in reading your good, your tender letter.

Your happiness has made me envious in seeing you live in three hearts! Yes, you are happy: you have sagely fulfilled the laws of social life, whilst I am outside of everything. It is only children loving and loved who can console a woman for the loss of her beauty. I shall be thirty soon, and at that age, the terrible internal lamentations of a woman commence. If I am beautiful yet, I perceive the limits of the feminine life; after which what will become of me? When I shall be forty, *he* will not be, he will be young still and I shall be old. When this thought traversed my heart, I remained at his feet an hour, making him swear that, when he should feel less love for me, he would tell me on the instant. But he is a child, he swears it to me as if his love could never diminish, and he is so handsome that—you understand! I believe him. Adieu, dear angel; shall we be again years without writing to each other? Happiness is monotonous in its expressions; thus it is perhaps because of this difficulty that Dante seems greater to loving souls in his *Paradise* than in his *Inferno*. I am not Dante, I am only your friend, and wish not to weary you. You, you can write to me, for you have in your children a varied happiness which goes on increasing, whilst mine—. Do not speak any more of it. I send you a thousand tendernesses.

LIII

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME GASTON

My dear Louise, I have read, re-read your letter, and the more its meaning has penetrated me the more have I seen in you less a woman than a child; you have not changed, you forget what I have said to you a thousand times,—Love is a theft made by the social state from the natural state; it is so transient in its nature, that the resources of society cannot change its primitive condition: thus all the noble souls endeavor to make a man of this infant; but then Love becomes, according to you yourself, a monstrosity. Society, my dear, has wished to be fruitful. In substituting durable sentiments for the fugitive folly of nature she has created the greatest human thing,—the Family, eternal base of all societies. She has sacrificed the man as well as the woman to her work; for, let us not deceive ourselves, the father of the family gives his activity, his strength, all his fortunes, to his wife. Is it not the wife who enjoys all the sacrifices? the luxury, the riches, is it not nearly all for her? for her the glory and the elegance, the sweetness and the flower of the household? Oh my angel, you are once more taking life very badly. To be adored is a theme of young girls, good for a few springs, but which could not be that of a married woman and a mother. Perhaps it is sufficient for the vanity of a woman to know that she can make herself adored. If you

wish to be wife and mother, return to Paris. Let me repeat it to you that you will lose yourself in happiness as others lose themselves through unhappiness. The things which do not weary us, silence, bread, the air, are without reproach because they are without taste; whilst the things full of savor, irritating our desires, end by wearying them. Listen to me, my child! At the present time, even though I could be loved by a man for whom I should feel rising within me the love which you bear to Gaston, I should know how to remain faithful to my dear duties and to my sweet family. Maternity, my angel, is for the heart of a woman one of those things simple, natural, fertile, inexhaustible as those which are the elements of life. I remember having one day, it is nearly fourteen years ago, embraced devotion as a shipwrecked man clings to the mast of his vessel, through despair; but to-day, when I call up by memory all my life before me, I would again choose this sentiment as the principle of my life, for it is the surest and the most fruitful of all. The example of your life, based on a ferocious egotism, although hidden by the poetry of the heart, has fortified my resolution. I shall never say these things to you again, but I should now say them to you once more for the last time on learning that your happiness resists the most terrible of trials.

Your life in the country, the object of my meditations, has suggested to me this other observation which I should submit to you. Our life is composed,

for the body as for the heart, of certain regular movements. Every excess brought into this mechanism is a cause of pleasure or of sorrow; now, pleasure or sorrow is a fever of the soul e n-tially transient, because it is not supportable for a long time. To make of excess the very life, is not that to live unhealthfully? You are living unhealthfully, in maintaining in the state of passion a sentiment which should become in marriage an equal and pure force. Yes, my angel, to-day I recognize it,—the glory of the household is precisely in this calm, in this profound mutual cognizance, in this exchange of good and evil with which the vulgar pleasantries reproach it. Oh! how great it is, that speech of the Duchesse de Sully, the wife of the great Sully in fact, to whom it was said that her husband, grave as he appeared, did not scruple to have a mistress: "That is very simple," she replied, "I am the honor of the house, and should be much mortified to play in it the rôle of a courtesan." More voluptuous than tender, you wish to be at once the wife and the mistress. With the soul of Héloïse and the senses of Saint Thérèse, you deliver yourself up to deviations sanctioned by the laws; in a word, you deprave the institution of marriage. Yes, you who judged me so severely when I seemed to be immoral in accepting on the evening of my marriage the means of happiness; in bending everything to your own use you merit to-day the reproaches which you addressed to me. What! you wish to subjugate nature and society to your caprice? You remain

yourself, you do not transform yourself in the least into that which a wife should be; you keep the wishes, the exactions, of a young girl, and you carry into your passion the most exact calculations, the most mercantile! Do you not sell your adornments very dear? I find you very suspicious with all your precautions. Oh! dear Louise, if you could know the sweetness of the efforts which the mothers expend on themselves in order to be good and tender to all their family! The independence and the pride of my character have been melted in a gentle melancholy, and which the maternal pleasures have dissipated in requiting it. If the morning was difficult, the evening will be pure and serene. I am afraid that it will be quite the contrary with your life.

In finishing your letter, I have entreated God to send you to pass a day in our midst to convert you to the family, to these joys unspeakable, constant, eternal, because they are true, simple, and according to nature. But alas! what can my reason do against a fault which renders you happy? I have tears in my eyes in writing these last words to you. I frankly believed that a few months devoted to this conjugal love would restore you to reason through satiety; but I see you insatiable, and after having killed a lover, you will finish by killing love. Adieu, dear wanderer; I despair, since the letter in which I hoped to restore you to social life by the picture of my happiness has only served for the glorification of your egotism. Yes, there is nothing

but yourself in your love, and you love Gaston much more for yourself than for himself.

LIV

MADAME GASTON TO THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE

May 20th.

Renée, the misfortune has come; no, it has descended upon your poor Louise with the rapidity of thunder, and you understand me,—unhappiness for me, that is doubt. Conviction, that would be death. Day before yesterday, after my first toilet, in looking for Gaston everywhere in order to take a little promenade before the déjeuner, I could not find him. I entered the stable, where I saw his mare covered with sweat and from whom the groom was removing with the aid of a knife the flecks of foam before drying her.

"Who then has got Fedelta into such a state?" I said.

"Monsieur," replied the boy.

I recognized on the horse's flanks the mud of Paris, which does not resemble the mud of the country.

"He has been to Paris," I thought.

This thought sent a thousand others into my heart and drew to it all the blood in my body. To go to Paris without saying anything to me about it, to select the hour in which I left him alone, to go there

and return with such rapidity that Fedelta was almost foundered!—The suspicion compressed me in so terrible a girdle that I could scarcely draw my breath. I went and sat down on a bench at the distance of a few steps to endeavor to recover my self-possession. Here Gaston found me, ghastly, frightful, as it would seem, for he said to me: "What is the matter with you?" so hastily and with a voice so full of anxiety, that I rose and took him by the arm; but I had no strength in my joints, and I was obliged to sit down again; he took me then in his arms and carried me into the parlor, a distance of a few steps, where all our frightened servants followed us; but Gaston sent them away with a gesture. When we were alone, I was able, without wishing to say anything, to reach our chamber, in which I locked myself so as to be able to weep unrestrained. Gaston remained at the door for nearly two hours listening to my sobs, interrogating with an angelic patience his creature who no longer replied to him.

"I will see you again when my eyes are no longer red and when my voice no longer trembles," I said to him finally.

The *you,* instead of our familiar and habitual *thee,* sent him suddenly out of the house. I bathed my eyes in ice-water, I refreshed my countenance, the door of our chamber was opened, I found him there, returned to his post without my having heard the sound of his footsteps.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked me.

"Nothing," I said to him. "I recognized the

white Paris mud on Fedelta's reeking flanks, I did not understand that you should go there without letting me know; but you are free."

"Your punishment for your so criminal doubts shall be not to learn my motives till to-morrow," he replied.

"Look at me," I said to him.

I plunged my eyes into his: the infinite penetrated the infinite. No, I did not perceive that shadow which infidelity diffuses in the soul and which necessarily changes the purity of the eyeballs. I pretended to him to be reassured, even though I should remain anxious. Men know, quite as well as we do, how to deceive, how to lie! We have not left each other since. Oh! dear, how much, at moments, in looking at him, I feel myself indissolubly attached to him. What inward tremors agitate me when he comes back after having left me alone for a moment! My life is in him, and not in myself. I have given cruel denials to your cruel letter. Did I ever feel this dependence on the part of that divine Spaniard, for whom I was what this atrocious darling is for me? How I hate that mare! What stupidity on my part to have had horses! But it would be necessary also to cut off Gaston's feet, or to detain him in the cottage. I was entirely occupied with these stupid thoughts, you may judge from that of my want of reason. If love has not constructed a cage for him, no power could retain a man who is weary.

"Do I weary you?" I said to him point-blank.

"How you torment yourself without cause!" he replied, his eyes full of a gentle pity. "I have never loved you so much."

"If that is true, my adored angel," I replied to him, "let me have Fedelta sold."

"Sell her," he said to me.

This word all but crushed me, Gaston seemed to say to me:—"You alone are rich here, I am nothing, I have no will at all." If he did not think this, I believed that he thought it, and I left him again, to go to bed,—the night had come.

Oh Renée, in the solitude, a destroying thought conducts you toward suicide. These delightful gardens, this starry night, this freshness which brought to me in little puffs the incense of all our flowers, our valley, our hills, everything seemed to me sombre, black and deserted. I was as it were at the foot of a precipice in the midst of serpents, of venomous plants; I no longer saw God in the heavens. After a night like this, a woman has grown older.

"Take Fedelta, hasten to Paris," I said to him the next morning, "do not sell her; I love her, she carries you!"

He was not deceived, nevertheless, by my accent, through which pierced the interior rage which I endeavored to conceal.

"Confidence!" he replied offering me his hand with a movement so noble and throwing upon me so noble a look, that I felt myself disarmed.

"We are very childish!" I cried.

"No, you love me, and that is all," he said pressing me to him.

"Go to Paris without me," I said to him making him understand that I had put away all my suspicions.

He went, I thought that he would stay with me. I abandon the attempt to paint to you my sufferings. There was within me another myself of whose existence I did not know. In the first place, this kind of scene, my dear, has a tragic solemnity for a woman who loves, which nothing can express; your whole life appears to you in the moment in which they are taking place, and the eyes perceive nowhere any horizon; the nothing is everything, there is a whole volume in the regard, the speech is full of icy suspicions, and in a movement of the lips may be read a sentence of death. I waited for his return, for had I not shown myself sufficiently noble and grand? I went up to the róof of the chalet and I followed him with my eyes along the highroad. Ah! my dear Renée, I saw him disappear with frightful rapidity.

"How he hurries there!" I thought involuntarily.

Then, once more alone, I fell back again into the hell of suppositions, into the tumult of suspicions. At moments the certainty of being betrayed seemed to me to be a balm, compared with the horrors of doubt! The doubt is our duel with ourselves, and we then give ourselves terrible wounds. I came and went, I went up and down the garden alleys, I returned to the chalet, I came out of it again like a

crazy woman. Leaving at seven o'clock, Gaston only returned at eleven; and as by the Park of Saint-Cloud and the Bois de Boulogne, a half hour suffices to reach Paris, it is evident that he had passed three hours in Paris. He entered triumphantly bringing me a little hand-whip in hard rubber, the handle of which is in gold.

For two weeks I had been without a whip; mine, old and worn-out, had broken.

"This is why you tortured me?" I said to him, admiring the workmanship of this jewel which contained a little perfume flask in the end.

Then I comprehended that this present concealed a new deceit; but I threw myself promptly on his neck, not without having reproached him gently for having imposed such cruel torments upon me for a bagatelle. He thought himself excessively clever. I saw then in his aspect, in his look, that species of interior joy which one feels in carrying out a trick successfully; it escapes like a light from our soul, like a ray of our spirit which reflects itself in the features, which disengages itself from the movement of the body. While admiring this pretty thing, I asked him, at a moment when we were looking at each other closely:

"Who made for you this work of art?"

"One of my friends, an artist."

"Ah! Verdier mounted it," I added, reading the name of the dealer stamped on the whip.

Gaston has remained very infantile, he blushed. I overwhelmed him with caresses to reward him for

having been ashamed of deceiving me. I played the innocent, and he thought that everything was ended.

May 25th.

The next morning about six o'clock, I put on my riding habit, and I descended at seven at Verdier's establishment, where I saw several whips of this pattern. A clerk recognized mine which I showed to him.

"We sold it yesterday to a young man," he said to me.

And, on the description which I gave him of my impostor of a Gaston, there was no longer any doubt. I spare you the palpitations of my heart, which bruised my chest in going to Paris and during this little scene in which my life was decided. When I returned at half-past seven, Gaston found me radiant, in a morning toilet, promenading with a deceitful light-heartedness and certain that nothing would betray my absence, into the secret of which I had admitted none but my old Philippe.

"Gaston," I said to him as we wandered around our pond, "I know well enough the difference which exists between a unique work of art, executed lovingly for a single person, and that which comes out of a mould."

Gaston turned pale and looked at me presenting to him the terrible *pièce à conviction*.

"My friend," I said to him, "it is not a whip, it is a screen behind which you hide a secret."

Thereupon, my dear, I gave myself the pleasure of seeing him twisting himself up in the mazes of falsehood and the labyrinth of deceit without being able to find an issue, displaying a prodigious art in his endeavors to find a wall to climb, but constrained to remain on the ground before an adversary who finally consented to allow herself to be pacified. This consentment came too late, as it always does in these scenes. Moreover, I had committed the fault against which my mother had endeavored to forewarn me. In showing itself openly, my jealousy established a state of warfare and all its stratagems between Gaston and myself. My dear, jealousy is essentially stupid and brutal. I promised myself then to suffer in silence, to watch everything, to acquire a certainty, and to then finish with Gaston, or to consent to my unhappiness,—there is no other conduct to follow for women of position. What is he hiding from me? for he conceals a secret from me. This secret concerns a woman. Is it some youthful adventure for which he blushes? What? This *what,* my dear, is engraved in four letters of fire on everything. I read this fatal word in looking in the mirror of our pond, across my shrubbery, in the clouds of the sky, on the ceilings, on the table, in the flowers of my carpet. In the midst of my sleep, a voice cries to me "What?" Dating from that morning, there has been in our life a cruel interest, and I have known the most bitter thoughts which can corrode our hearts,—to belong to a man whom we think unfaithful. Oh! my dear, this life partakes

at once of hell and of paradise. I had not yet even set my foot in this furnace, I, up to this time, so worshipfully adored.

"Ah! you wished one day to penetrate into the sombre and burning palaces of suffering?" I said to myself. "Well, the demons have heard your fatal wish: go forward, unhappy one!"

May 30th.

Since that day, Gaston, instead of working leisurely and with the ease of the rich artist who caresses his work, gives himself tasks like the writer who lives by his pen. He employs four hours every day in finishing two pieces for the theatre.

"He is in want of money!"

This thought was whispered to me by an inward voice. He expends almost nothing; we live in an absolute confidence, there is not a corner of his cabinet in which my eyes or my fingers may not search, his yearly expenses do not amount to two thousand francs, I know him to have thirty thousand francs left, rather than guarded, in a drawer. You know my meaning. In the middle of the night, I went during his sleep to see if the sum was still there. What an icy shudder seized me when I found the drawer empty! In the same week, I discovered that he goes to get letters at Sèvres, and he must tear them up immediately after having read them, for, notwithstanding my Figaro-like inventions, I have not been able to find any traces of

them. Alas! my angel, notwithstanding my promises and all the fine oaths which I made to myself on the subject of the whip, a movement of the soul which must be called folly impelled me, and I followed him in one of his rapid rides to the post office. Gaston was terrified to be surprised on horseback paying the carriage of a letter which he was holding in his hand. After having looked at me fixedly, he put Fedelta at the gallop so rapidly that I was quite overcome on arriving at the wooden gate, in a moment in which I thought myself unable to feel any corporal fatigue, I suffered so in my soul! There, Gaston said nothing to me, he rang and waited, without speaking to me. I was more dead than alive. Either I was right or I was wrong; but in either case, my espionage was unworthy of Armande-Louise-Marie de Chaulieu. I rolled in the social mud below the grisette, the ill-bred girl, side by side with the courtesans, the actresses, the uneducated creatures. What sufferings! Finally the gate opened, he gave his horse to his groom, and I dismounted also, but in his arms, he extended them to me; I gathered up my dress on my left arm, and we walked away—still silent. The hundred steps which we took thus can count for me a hundred years in purgatory. At each step, thousands of thoughts, almost visible, danced in tongues of fire before my eyes, leaped at my soul, having each one a dart, a different venom! When the groom and the horses were at a distance, I stopped Gaston, I looked at him, and with a movement which you

should have seen, I said to him, indicating the fatal letter which he still held in his right hand:

"Let me read it?"

He gave it to me, I unsealed it, and read a letter in which Nathan, the dramatic author, informed him that one of our pieces, received, accepted and put in rehearsal, was to be presented the next Saturday. The letter contained a ticket for a box. Although for me this was to go from martyrdom to the heavens, the demons still cried to me, to trouble my joy: "Where are the thirty thousand francs?" And the dignity, the honor, all my ancient self, prevented me from asking the question; I had it on my lips; I knew that, if my thought became speech, it would be necessary for me to throw myself in my pond, and I resisted with difficulty the desire to speak. Dear, did I not then suffer beyond the woman's strength?

"You are wearying yourself here, my poor Gaston," I said to him, handing him back the letter. "If you wish, we will return to Paris."

"To Paris, why?" said he. "I wished to know if I had any talent, and to taste the punch of success!"

At a moment in which he was working, I could very well have appeared surprised in searching in the drawer and not finding the thirty thousand francs; but would that not have been to invite this answer: "I have obliged such and such a friend," which a clever man like Gaston would not fail to make?

My dear, the moral of this is that the fine success of the piece to which all Paris is crowding at this moment is due to us although Nathan had all the glory of it. I am one of the two stars in this announcement: ET MM. * * * I saw the first representation, hidden in the back of a box in the proscenium on the ground floor.

July 1st.

Gaston is still working and goes constantly to Paris; he is engaged on new pieces so as to have a pretext for going to Paris and for procuring money. We have three pieces received and two ordered. Oh! my dear, I am lost, I am walking in the shadows. I would burn my house to be able to see clearly. What is the significance of such conduct? Is he ashamed of having received a fortune from me? His soul is too great to be affected by such silliness. Moreover, when a man begins to conceive these scruples, they are inspired in him by an interest of the heart. One accepts everything from one's wife, but no one wishes to have anything from the woman whom you think of leaving or whom you no longer love. If he wants so much money, it is doubtless because he has to expend it for a woman. If it were only a question of himself, could he not take it out of my purse without ceremony? We have a hundred thousand francs of savings! In short, my beautiful lamb, I have traversed the entire world of suspicions, and, everything

taken into consideration, I am certain that I have a rival. He forsakes me, for whom? I wish to see *her.*

July 10th.

I have seen clearly: I am lost. Yes, Renée, at thirty, in all the glory of beauty, rich with the resources of my spirit, adorned with the seductions of the toilet, always fresh, elegant, I am betrayed, and for whom? for an Englishwoman who has big feet, big bones, a big breast, some Britannic cow. I can no longer doubt. This is what has happened to me in these last few days.

Wearied with doubting, thinking that, if he had helped one of his friends, Gaston would have told me of it, seeing him accused by his own silence, and finding him incited to work by a continual thirst for money; jealous of his work, disquieted by his perpetual goings to Paris, I took my measures, and these measures caused me to descend then so low that I cannot tell you about them. Three days ago, I learned that Gaston when he goes to Paris, visits in the Rue de la Ville-l'Évêque, at a house in which his amours are guarded with a discretion unexampled in Paris. The porter, very taciturn, said but little, but enough to make me despair. I made then the sacrifice of my life and I alone wished to know everything. I went to Paris, I took an apartment in the house which is opposite that in which Gaston visits, and I saw him with my own eyes entering

on horseback into the court. Oh! I received only too soon a horrible and frightful revelation. This Englishwoman, who appears to me to be thirty-six years old, is called Madame Gaston. This discovery was for me the stroke of death. Finally, I have seen her going to the Tuileries with two children—. Oh! my dear, two children who are the living miniatures of Gaston. It is impossible not to be struck with a so scandalous resemblance—. And what pretty children! they are dressed richly, as the English know how to array them. She has given him children! everything is explained. This Englishwoman is a species of Greek statue descended from some monument; she has the whiteness and the coldness of marble, she walks solemnly like a happy mother. She is handsome, it must be admitted, but she is as heavy as a man-of-war. There is nothing fine or distinguished about her,—certainly she is not a *lady,* she is the daughter of some farmer in a poor village in a distant county, or the eleventh daughter of some poor minister. I returned from Paris in a dying condition. On the road, a thousand thoughts assailed me like so many demons. Could she be married? had he known her before marrying me? has she been the mistress of some rich man who has abandoned her, and has she not suddenly fallen to the care of Gaston? I made an infinite number of suppositions, as if there were any need of suppositions in presence of children. The next day I returned to Paris, and I gave enough money to the porter of the house to secure as

answer to the question: "Is Madame Gaston married legally?"

"Yes, *Mademoiselle.*"

July 15th.

My dear, since that morning, I have redoubled my love for Gaston, and I have found him more amorous than ever; he is so young! Twenty times, when we rose in the morning, I was ready to say to him: "You love me more than she of the Rue de la Ville-l'Évêque?" But I dare not explain to myself the mystery of my forbearance.

"You love children a good deal?" I asked him.

"Oh yes!" he replied; "but we shall have some!"

"And how?"

"I have consulted the most learned physicians, and they all have advised me to take a journey of a couple of months."

"Gaston," I said to him, "if I had been able to love anyone absent, I would have remained in the convent to the end of my days."

He began to laugh, and I, my dear, the word *journey* killed me. Oh! certainly, I had rather throw myself out of the window than allow myself to roll down the stairway clinging from step to step—. Farewell, my angel; I have rendered my death sweet, elegant but infallible. My will was drawn up yesterday. You can now come to see me, the interdict is raised. Hasten to receive my adieux. My death will be, like my life, marked

with distinction and with grace: I will die in the possession of all my faculties.

Adieu, dear sisterly spirit, you whose affection has not had any aversions nor ups nor downs, and who, like the equable light of the moon, have always soothed my heart; we have not known the vivacities, but we have also not tasted the venomous bitterness of love. You have comprehended life wisely. Adieu!

LV

THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME GASTON

July 16th.

My dear Louise, I send you this letter by an express before hastening to the chalet myself. Calm yourself. Your last message appeared to me so senseless, that I thought myself empowered, in such circumstances, to confide everything to Louis,—it was a question of saving you from yourself. If, like yourself, we have employed horrible methods, the result is so happy that I am certain of your approbation. I even descended to employ the police; but that is a secret between the prefect, ourselves, and you. Gaston is an angel! These are the facts,—his brother, Louis Gaston, died at Calcutta, in the service of a merchant company, at the moment when he was about to return to France, rich, happy and married. The widow of an English merchant

had given him the most brilliant fortune. After ten years of labors undertaken for the sake of sending the means of existence to his brother, whom he adored and to whom he did not mention his losses in his letters so as not to distress him, he was surprised by the failure of the famous Halmer. The widow was ruined. The blow was so violent, that Louis Gaston's head was affected. The mind, in becoming enfeebled, permitted the malady to take possession of the body, and he succumbed to it in Bengal, where he had gone to realize on the remnant of the fortune of his poor wife. This dear captain had placed in the hands of a banker a first sum of three hundred thousand francs to send to his brother; but this banker, dragged down by the house of Halmer, deprived them of this last resource. The widow of Louis Gaston, this handsome woman whom you take for your rival, arrived in Paris with two children who are your nephews, and without a sou. The jewels of the mother scarcely sufficed to pay the passage of her family. The information which Louis Gaston had given the banker to send the money to Marie Gaston enabled the widow to find the former lodging of your husband. As your Gaston had disappeared without saying where he was going, Madame Louis Gaston was sent to D'Arthez, the only person who could give any information concerning Marie Gaston. D'Arthez had all the more generously provided for the first needs of this young woman in that Louis Gaston had, four years before, at the date of his marriage,

enquired for his brother of our celebrated writer, knowing him to be the friend of Marie. The captain had enquired of D'Arthez for some way of securing the payment of this sum to Marie Gaston. D'Arthez had replied that Marie Gaston had become rich through his marriage with the Baronne de Macumer. Their beauty, this magnificent present from their mother, had saved, in the Indies as in Paris, the two brothers from all misfortune. Is it not a touching history? D'Arthez had naturally ended by writing to your husband the condition in which his sister-in-law and his nephews found themselves, and informing him of the generous intentions which chance had caused to miscarry, but which Gaston of the Indies had entertained for the Gaston of Paris. Your dear Gaston, as you may well imagine, hastened precipitately to Paris. This is the history of his first excursion. For the last five years he has put aside fifty thousand francs of the income which you have forced him to take, and he has employed them in the purchase of two inscriptions of twelve hundred francs of income each, in the names of his nephews; then he furnished the apartment in which his sister-in-law is living, promising her three thousand francs every three months. This is the history of his theatrical labors and of the pleasure which the success of his first piece caused him. Thus Madame Gaston is not your rival, and bears your name very legitimately. A noble and delicate man like Gaston felt himself obliged to hide this adventure from you, doubting your generosity.

Your husband did not regard as his own that which you have given him. D'Arthez read to me the letter which he wrote him asking him to be one of the witnesses of your marriage: Marie Gaston said in this that his happiness would be complete if he had not any debts for you to pay and if he had been rich. A virgin soul is not sufficiently mistress of itself not to have such sentiments: they are or they are not; and when they are, their delicacy, their exactions, may be conceived. The facts are simply that Gaston wished, himself, to provide secretly a comfortable existence for the widow of his brother, when this woman had sent him a hundred thousand crowns of her own fortune. She is beautiful, she has a heart, distinguished manners, but no sprightliness of wit. This woman is a mother; is not this to say that I was attached to her as soon as I saw her, finding her with a child in her arms and the other dressed like the *baby* of a lord. Everything for the children! is her motto in the smallest things. Thus, far from quarreling with your adored Gaston, you have only new reasons for loving him! I have seen him, he is the most charming young man in Paris. Oh yes! dear child, I have very well comprehended in seeing him that a woman could be crazy for him,—he has the physiognomy of his soul. In your place, I would take the widow and the two children to the chalet, putting up for them some delightful little cottage, and I would constitute them my children! Reassure yourself then, and prepare in your turn this surprise for Gaston.

LVI

MADAME GASTON TO THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE

Ah! my well-beloved, hear the terrible, the fatal, the insolent word of the imbecile Lafayette to his master, to his king: *It is too late!* Oh! my life, my beautiful life! what doctor will restore it to me? I am struck with death. Alas! am I not a will-o'-the-wisp of a woman destined to extinguish itself after having blazed? My eyes are two torrents of tears, and—I can only weep when far from him.—I fly him and he seeks me. My despair is all inward. Dante forgot my torture in his *Inferno*. Come to see me die!

LVII

THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO THE COMTE DE L'ESTORADE

At the Chalet, August 7th.

My dear friend, take the children and make the journey to Provence without me; I shall remain with Louise, who has only a few days more to live: I owe myself to her and to her husband, who will go mad, I think.

Since the hint which you know of and which made me fly in the company of the doctors to Ville-d'Avray, I have not left this charming woman and have not been able to write to you, for this is the

fifteenth night which I have passed here. When I arrived, I found her with Gaston, beautiful and adorned, her countenance smiling and happy. What a sublime falsehood! These two beautiful children had come to an explanation. For a moment I was, like Gaston, the dupe of this audacity; but Louise grasped my hand and said in my ear:

"He must be deceived, I am dying."

An icy chill seized me on finding her hands burning and rouge on her cheeks. I congratulated myself on my prudence. I had had the precaution, in order not to frighten anyone, to ask the doctors to walk about in the woods while waiting till I should send for them.

"Leave us alone," she said to Gaston. "Two women who see each other again after five years of separation have many secrets to confide to each other, and Renée has doubtless some confidence to make to me."

When we were alone, she threw herself in my arms without being able to restrain her tears.

"What has happened?" I said to her. "I have brought you, in any case, the first surgeon and the first physician of the Hôtel-Dieu, with Bianchon; there are four of them."

"Oh! if they can save me, if it is time, let them come!" she cried. "The same feeling which compelled me to die, now urges me to live."

"But what have you done?"

"I have made myself consumptive in its most violent form in a few days."

"And how?"

"I got myself into a violent perspiration in the night and hastened to place myself on the border of the pond, in the dew. Gaston thinks that I have a cold, and I am dying!"

"Send him to Paris quickly; I am going for the doctors myself," I said, running like one crazy to the place where I had left them.

Alas! my friend, after the consultation not one of these learned men gave me the least hope. They all think that when the leaves fall Louise will die. The physical constitution of this dear creature has singularly served her purpose,—she had natural dispositions to the malady which she has developed; she could have lived for a long time, but in a few days she has rendered everything irreparable.

I will not tell you my impressions on hearing this decree so well founded. You know that I have lived as much for Louise as for myself. I remained overwhelmed, and did not conduct to the door those cruel doctors. With my face bathed in tears, I passed I do not know how long a time in sorrowful meditation. A celestial voice drew me from my torpor with these words: "Well, I am condemned!" which Louise said to me, placing her hand on my shoulder. She caused me to rise and led me into her little salon.

"Do not leave me again," she asked me with a supplicating look; "I do not wish to see despair around me; I wish above all to deceive *him*, I shall

LOUISE TO RENÉE

"I have made myself consumptive in its most violent form in a few days."

"And how?"

"I got myself into a violent perspiration in the night and hastened to place myself on the border of the pond, in the dew. Gaston thinks that I have a cold, and I am dying!"

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have the strength for it. I am full of energy, of youth, and I shall know how to die on my feet. As for myself, I do not complain, I shall die as I have often wished to,—at thirty, young, beautiful, with all my faculties. As to him, I should have rendered him unhappy, I see it. I am taken in the snares of my love, like a doe which drowns herself in struggling against being taken: of us two I am the doe, and a very wild one. My unfounded jealousies have already affected his heart in such a manner as to make him suffer. The day on which my suspicions should have encountered indifference, the reward which attends jealousy, well,—I should have died. I have had my full account of life. There are beings who have for sixty years been in service under the control of the world and who, in fact, have not lived two years; on the contrary, I appear to be only thirty, but in reality I have had sixty years of love. Thus for me, for him, this dénouement is happy. As to us two, that is another thing: you lose a sister who loves you, and this loss is irreparable. You alone here, you should weep for my death. My death," she resumed after a long pause during which I saw her only through the veil of my tears, "brings with it a cruel lesson. My dear doctor in a corset is right: marriage should not have for its foundation passion, nor even love. Your life is a beautiful and noble life, you have walked on your way, loving always more and more your Louis; whereas when the conjugal life begins by an extreme ardor, it can but decrease. I have

been twice wrong, and twice death has come to extinguish my happiness with his fleshless hand. He carried off from me the most noble and the most devoted of men; to-day, the skeleton carries me away from the most beautiful, the most charming, the most poetic spouse in the world. But I have known alternately the beau ideal of the soul and of the body. In Felipe, the soul dominated the body and transformed it; in Gaston, the heart, intellect and beauty rival each other. I die adored, what could I wish more?—To reconcile myself with God whom I have neglected perhaps, and towards whom I will take my flight full of love in asking of Him to restore to me one day these two angels in the heavens. Without them, paradise would be a desert for me. My example would be fatal: I am an exception. As it is impossible to encounter more than one Felipe or more than one Gaston, the social law is in this in accord with the natural law. Yes, the woman is a feeble being who should when giving herself in marriage, make an entire sacrifice of her will to the man, who owes to her in return the sacrifice of his egotism. The revolts and the tears of which our sex has been so prodigal in these latter times with so much demonstration are stupidities which entitle us to be called children, as so many philosophers have done."

She continued to speak thus with her soft voice which you know, saying the wisest things in her elegant manner, until Gaston entered, bringing from Paris his sister-in-law, the two children and

the English nurse for the children whom Louise had asked him to get.

"See my pretty executioners," she said on seeing her two nephews. "Could I not readily have deceived myself? How much they resemble their uncle!"

She was charming for Madame Gaston the elder, whom she entreated to consider the chalet as her own house, and to whom she did the honors of it with those manners à la Chaulieu which she possesses in the highest degree. I wrote immediately to the Duchesse and to the Duc de Chaulieu, to the Duc de Rhétoré and to the Duc de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, as well as to Madeleine. I did well. The next day, fatigued with so many efforts, Louise was not able to walk; she did not even rise to be present at the dinner. Madeleine de Lenoncourt, her two brothers and her mother came in the evening. The coldness which the marriage of Louise had caused to arise between her and her family was removed. Since that evening, the two brothers and the father of Louise come on horseback every morning, and the two duchesses pass all their evenings at the chalet. Death brings together as much as it separates, it silences unworthy passions. Louise is sublime in her grace, her reasonableness, charm, wit and sensibility. Up to the last moment, she displayed that taste which has rendered her so celebrated, and dispensed to us freely the treasures of that wit, which made her one of the queens of Paris.

"I wish to be pretty even in my coffin," she said to me, with that smile which is hers only, when taking to her bed to languish there for these two weeks.

In her chamber, there is no trace of sickness: the draughts, the drugs, and all the medical paraphernalia are hidden.

"Shall I not make a beautiful corpse?" she said yesterday to the Curé of Sèvres, in whom she has confided all.

We take a miser's pride in everything of hers. Gaston, whom so many anxieties, so many frightful indications, have prepared, does not want for courage, but he is struck: I should not be surprised to see him follow his wife naturally. Yesterday he said to me, while walking around the sheet of water:

"I should be the father of those two children—." And he showed me his sister-in-law who was out walking with his nephews. "But, although I wish to do nothing to take myself out of this world, promise me to be a second mother to them and to permit your husband to accept the official guardianship which I will confide to him conjointly with my sister-in-law."

He said this without the least emphasis and like a man who feels himself lost. His countenance replies with smiles to the smiles of Louise, and I am the only one who is not deceived. He displays a courage equal to hers. Louise has wished to see her godson; but I am not grieved that he is in Provence, she would have been able to be very

bountiful to him, which would have embarrassed me considerably.

Adieu, my dear friend.

August 25th—*the day of her fête*—.

Yesterday evening, Louise was for some moments a prey to delirium; but it was a truly elegant delirium which proves that spiritual people do not become foolish like the bourgeois or like the stupid. She sang in an almost extinguished voice some Italian airs from the *Puritans,* from *La Somnambula* and from *Moses.* We were all silent around the bed, and we had all of us, even her brother Rhétoré, tears in our eyes, so clear was it to us that her soul was thus escaping. She saw us no longer! All her grace was still in the charms of this song, feeble and of a divine softness. Her agony commenced in the night. I came at seven o'clock in the morning to raise her myself; she had recovered some strength, she wished to sit at her window, she asked for Gaston's hand—. Then, dear friend, the most charming angel that we can ever see on this earth left us nothing but her mortal body. Having received the Sacrament the evening before, unknown to Gaston, who during the terrible ceremony, had snatched a little sleep, she had required of me that I should read her in French the *De Profundis,* while she was thus contemplating the beautful bit of nature which she herself had created. She repeated the words mentally and clasped the hands of her husband, kneeling on the other side of the sofa.

August 26th.

My heart is broken. I have just seen her in her shroud, she has become pale in it with violet tints. Oh! I wish to see my children! my children! Bring my children to me!

Paris, 1841.

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